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WOMEN IN POLITICS

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS  
OF WOMEN OF 1899

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EDITED BY  
THE COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN  
*President*



# WOMEN IN POLITICS

BEING THE

POLITICAL SECTION

OF

The International Congress of Women

LONDON, JULY 1899



WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY MISS E. S. LIDGETT

*Convener of the Political Sub-Committee*



LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN  
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LIST OF MEMBERS OF POLITICAL SECTIONAL  
~~COMMITTEE OF THE AND COMMITTEE OF~~

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The General Officers of the International Council of Women were *ex-officio* members of this and all Sectional Committees in connection with the Congress.



v. 5



**LIST OF MEMBERS OF POLITICAL SECTIONAL  
COMMITTEE OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF  
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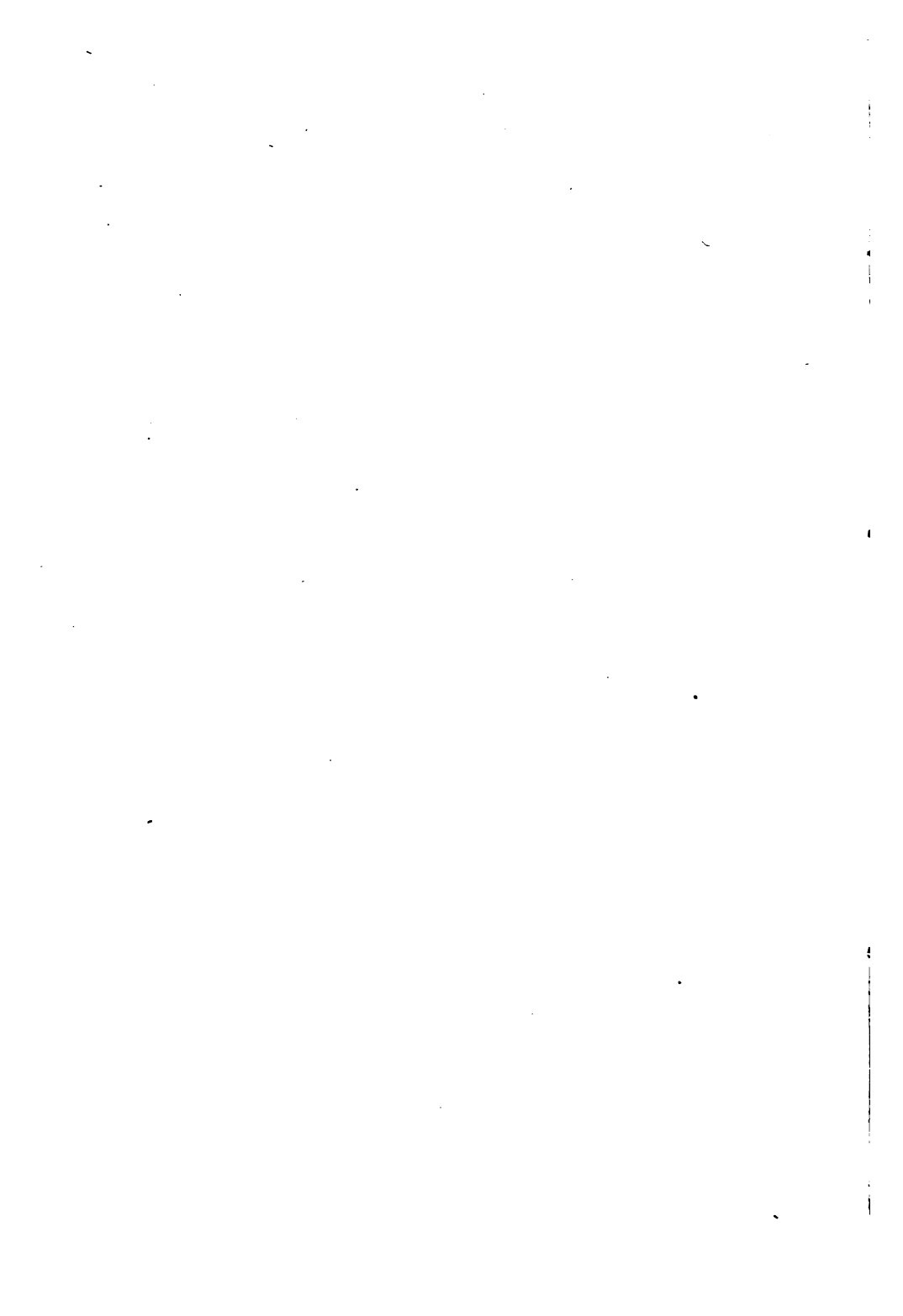
Lady ROBERTS-AUSTEN.

Hon. Mrs BERTRAND RUSSELL.

Mrs SHELDON AMOS.

Lady TREVELYAN.

Lady WESTBURY.



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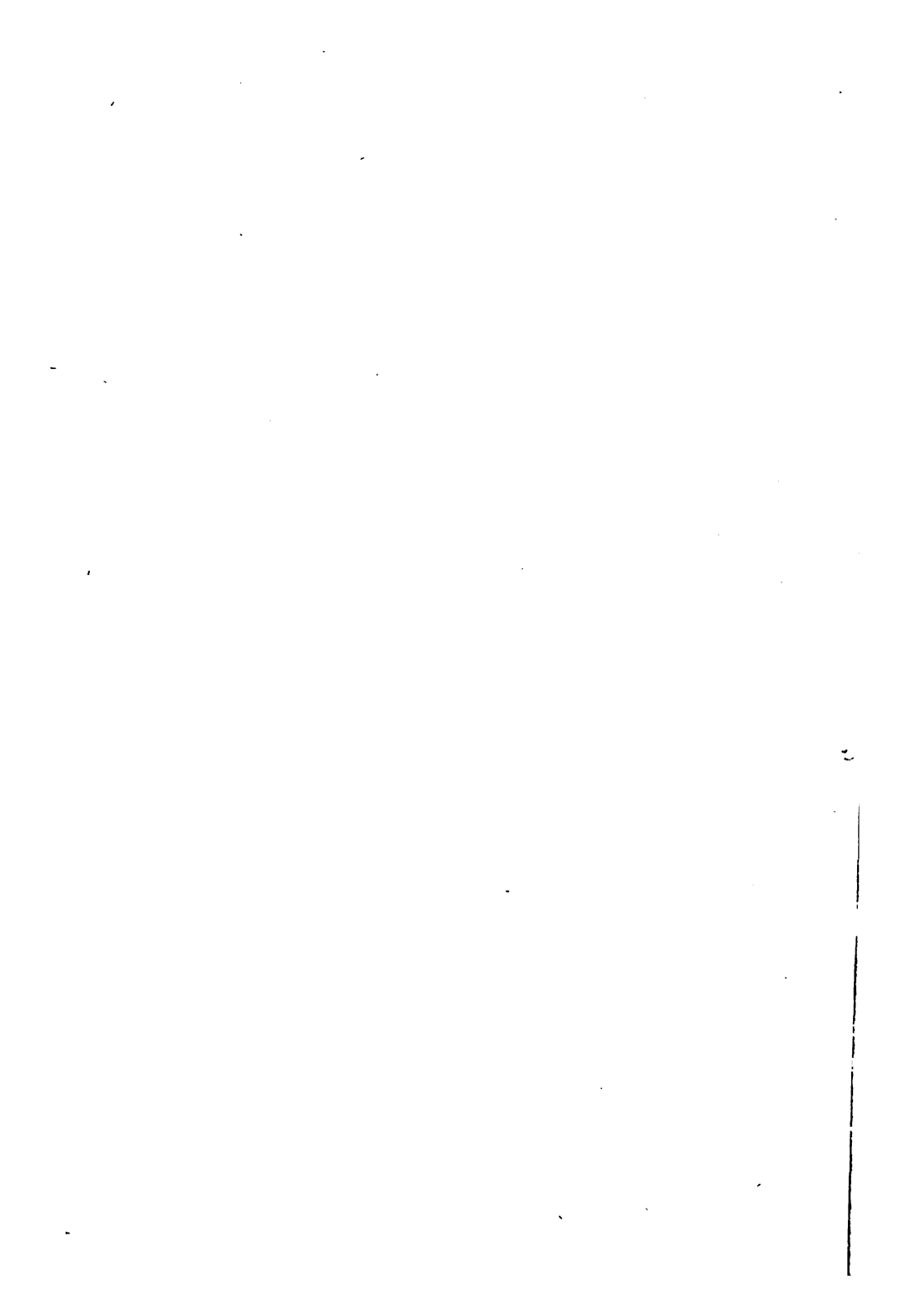
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# WOMEN IN POLITICS

## INTRODUCTION.

FIVE meetings were held in this Section. Papers were read by women representing many countries with varieties of circumstance, of ideas and traditions differing as widely as Germany or France and the United States, yet all showing an inspiration quietly and steadily growing, not for a life of notoriety and publicity, but for a recognised and responsible participation in the life of the nation, the district or the commune, whose burdens and whose needs press as heavily on women as on men.

The title Political was used as applying to those forms of public work in which women have already taken part, as members of School Boards, Technical Education Boards, Guardian Boards, Vestries, Parish and District Councils, and also to the great question of Political Enfranchisement. The first meeting of the Section was devoted to this subject. In accordance with the constitution of the Council, papers were read and free discussion was invited on both sides. But in the discussion it so happened that all the arguments used were on the side of enfranchisement, and it was evident that the audience were of the same mind beforehand.

While Mademoiselle de Mülinen had to tell of the limited powers of women in Switzerland, that land of political freedom and independence, and Madame Versluis-Poelman had to tell of a deliberate narrowing a few years ago of the name "Netherlands" to signify for election purposes a Dutchman only and not a Dutchwoman, Miss Susan B. Anthony could bring encouragement from long service in the cause of a larger life for women in the United States, of work begun in the face of ridicule and contempt, and continued with undaunted perseverance until, in some of the States at least, the position and influence of women had received their due recognition in all except the political suffrage for which they were still working.

In all matters of Local Government and administration of States' relief of the destitute, it is clear that the details, the divisions and the names of things must vary greatly, and that the practice of one country must be the suggestion rather than the pattern on which another country may set to work. At first it might seem that discussions of such matters would have but

little practical value. It really happened that, meeting face to face, comparing experiences by word of mouth, and the friendly discussion of principles was welcomed and appreciated by members as far removed as those representing New Zealand or New South Wales and those from Canada, or those who told of the newly-elected Boards of Guardians with their newly-elected women, and the uplifting in the Poor Law work and Local Government in Ireland. There was a note of encouragement to be heard all round.

By a strange coincidence the week in which women were learning more of each other's work, and especially on Urban and Rural Governing Bodies, of the wise and beneficent work of the Southwark Vestry, of which Miss Busk is a member, of the business activity of Mrs Grans, as vestrywoman, overseer of the poor and member of the Assessment Committee for the Strand, the Houses of Parliament, while expressing no adverse opinion as to the work done or likely to be done by women, resolved to put an end to it in London at least, considering that the alteration of areas, titles and decorations would make it too unsuitable for women for the electors to be allowed a choice in the matter.

This fact lends a historical interest to Miss Busk's paper as far as it relates to Urban Governing Bodies. It is still to be hoped that its interest will not become merely antiquarian, and that not many years hence the ratepayers and inhabitants of London will again be permitted to entrust to suitable women a share in work of vital importance to the homes of the people.

Anyone who attended the meetings must have observed that after all the interests of home-life were first and foremost, and that the speakers in this Section were not "feminist" in the sense of magnifying their own virtues as compared with those of men, or pressing their own interests as against the real interests of men. They did not seek for "gallantry," and if they looked for justice, it was for a justice that should enable them more fully and freely to serve the community.

While it is quite true that this Section, like the whole Congress, met in the interests of no one propaganda, there could be little doubt as to the ideas of most of those who took part in it. They did look for larger powers, for fuller trust from men, for a deepening sense of public responsibility among women, and for a high standard of work among the women who, in any country or place, should offer themselves to serve their community or their country in any public position of trust.

C. S. LIDGETT,

*Convener of Political Sub-Committee.*



## The Position of Women in the Political Life of the United States.

GREAT HALL, ST MARTIN'S TOWN HALL.

*TUESDAY, JUNE 27, MORNING.*

Mrs MAY WRIGHT SEWALL in the Chair.

Miss Susan B. Anthony (United States).

FIFTY years ago woman in the United States was without a recognised individuality in any department of life. No provision was made in public or private schools for her education in anything beyond the rudimentary branches. An educated woman was a rarity, and was gazed upon with something akin to awe.

In those days the women of the family were kept closely at home, carding, spinning and weaving, making the butter and cheese, knitting and sewing, working by day and night, planning and economising to educate the boys of the family. Thus the girls toiled so long as they remained under the home roof, their services belonging to the father by law and by custom. Any kind of a career for a woman was a thing undreamed of. Among the poorer families the girls might go about among the neighbours and earn a miserable pittance at housework or sewing. When the boy was 21, the father agreed to pay him a fixed sum per annum thenceforth for his services, or, in default of this, he was free to carry his labour where it would receive a financial reward. No such agreement was made with the girls of the family. They continued to work without wages after they were 21, exactly as they did before. When they married, their services were transferred to the husband, and were considered to be bountifully rewarded by food, shelter, and usually a very scanty supply of clothes. Any wages the wife might earn outside of the home belonged by law to the husband.

Where daughters received property, it passed directly into the sole possession of the husband, and all the rents and profits belonged to him to use as he pleased. At his death he could dispose of it by will, depriving the wife of all but what was called

the "widow's dower," a life-interest in one-third of that which was by right her own property. The husband could apprentice the children at an early age, in spite of the mother's protest, and at his death could dispose of the children by will, even an unborn child. The wife could neither sue nor be sued, nor testify in the courts. The phrase in constant use in legal decisions was, "the wife is dead in law," or, "husband and wife are one, and that one the husband." According to the English Common Law, which then prevailed in every State in the Union except Louisiana, a man might beat his wife up to the point of endangering her life, without being liable to prosecution.

Fifty years ago no occupations were open to women except cooking, sewing, teaching and factory work. Very few women were sufficiently educated to teach, but those who could do so received from \$4 to \$8 a month and "boarded round," while men, for exactly the same service, received \$30 a month and board. Every woman must marry, either with or without love, for the sake of support, or be doomed to a life of utter dependence, living, after the death of the parents, in the home of a married brother or sister, the drudge and burden-bearer of the family, without any financial recompense, and usually looked upon with disrespect by the children.

Scarcely less under the ban was the woman who dared venture into the field of literature. No pen can depict the scorn and derision that expressed themselves in that word "bluestocking." The literary woman placed herself forever beyond the pale of marriage, for no man would be brave enough to take for a wife a creature who had thus unsexed herself. This belief prevailed, to a great extent, in regard to a woman who attempted any vocation outside of domestic service, that by so doing she became at once and forever unfitted for the duties of wife and mother. Of all the old prejudices that cling to the hem of woman's garments and persistently impede her progress, none holds faster than this. The idea that she owes service to man instead of to herself, and that it is her highest duty to aid his development rather than her own, will be the last to die.

In that day not even woman herself had so much as a dream of entering the professions of law, medicine and theology. When the genius of Harriet Hosmer impelled her to take up sculpture, she travelled from one end of the country to the other begging for an opportunity to make the necessary study of anatomy. When Elizabeth Blackwell determined to consecrate her life to medicine, not one of the standard medical colleges

would admit her as a student, and society ostracised her. After Antoinette Brown had graduated with high honours from Oberlin College, even that institution placed every possible obstacle in the way of her entrance into the Theological Department. As for the profession of law, nobody lived in those times who had even a vision of a day when woman would enter that domain which seemed so sacredly the exclusive possession of man. Politics seemed a great deal further away than paradise, and the most radical reformer had not the prophetic eye which could discern the woman politician.

While there had been individual demands from time to time, the first organised body to formulate a declaration of the rights of women was the one which met at Seneca Falls, July 19-20, 1848, called by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Every inequality of the existing laws and customs was carefully considered, and a thorough and complete readjustment demanded. The proceedings of this Convention were ridiculed by the Press and denounced by the Pulpit from one end of the country to the other. Its demands were considered the most absurd and preposterous that could be made. Now, at the end of half a century, we find that, with few exceptions, all of the demands then formulated have been granted. The great exception is the yielding of political rights, and toward this one point are directed now all the batteries of scorn, of ridicule, of denunciation that formerly poured their fire all along the line. Although not one of the predicted calamities occurred upon the granting of the other demands, the world is asked to believe that all of them will happen if this last stronghold is surrendered.

There is not one foot of advanced ground upon which women stand to-day that has not been obtained through the hard-fought battles of other women. The close of this nineteenth century finds every trade, vocation and profession open to women, and every opportunity at their command for preparing themselves to follow these occupations. The girls as well as the boys of a family now fit themselves for such careers as their tastes and abilities permit. A vast amount of the household drudgery, that once monopolised the whole time and strength of the mother and daughters, has been taken outside and turned over to machinery in vast establishments. A money value is placed upon the labour of women. The ban of social ostracism has been largely removed from the woman wage-earner. Woman is no longer compelled to marry for support, but may herself make her own home and earn her own financial independence.

With but few exceptions, the highest institutions of learning in the land are as freely opened to girls as to boys, and they may receive their degrees at legal, medical and theological colleges, and practise their professions without hindrance. In the world of literature and art women divide the honours with men; and our civil service rules have secured for them many thousands of remunerative positions under the Government.

It is especially worthy of note that along with this general advancement of women has come a marked improvement in household methods. Woman's increased intelligence manifests itself in this department as conspicuously as in any other. Education, culture, mental discipline, business training develop far more capable mothers and housewives than were possible under the old *régime*. Men of the present generation give especial thought to comradeship in the selection of a wife, and she is no less desirable in their eyes because she is a college graduate or has learned the value and the management of money through having earned it.

There has been a radical revolution in the legal status of woman. In most States the old Common Law has been annulled by legislative enactment, through which partial justice, at least, has been done to married women. In nearly every State they may retain and control property owned at marriage, and all they may receive by gift or inheritance thereafter, and also their earnings outside the home. They may sue and be sued, testify in the courts, and carry on business in their own name, but in no State have wives any ownership in the joint earnings. In six or seven States mothers have equal guardianship of the children. While in most States the divorce laws are the same for men and women, they never can bear equally upon both while all the property earned during marriage belongs wholly to the husband.

The department of politics has been slowest to give admission to women. Suffrage is the pivotal right, and if it could have been secured at the beginning of the movement for equality in the eyes of the law, women would not have been half a century in gaining the privileges enumerated above, for privileges they must be called so long as others may either give or take them away. If women could make the laws or elect those who make them, they would be in the position of sovereigns instead of subjects.

But even this stronghold is beginning to yield to the long and steady pressure. In 25 States women possess suffrage in school matters; in 4 States they have a limited suffrage in local affairs; in 1 State they have municipal suffrage; in 4 States

they have full suffrage—local, State and national. Women are becoming more and more interested in political questions and public affairs. Every campaign sees greater numbers in attendance at the meetings, and able women speakers are now found upon the platforms of all parties. Some of the finest political writing in the great newspapers of the day is done by women, and the papers are extensively read by women of all classes. In many of the large cities women have formed civic clubs and are exercising a distinctive influence in municipal matters. In most of the States of the Union women are eligible for many offices.

It follows, as a natural result, that in the States where women vote they are eligible to all offices. They have been sent as delegates to National Conventions, made Presidential electors, and are sitting to-day as members in both the Upper and Lower Houses of the Legislatures. In some towns all the offices are filled by women. These radical changes have been effected without any social upheaval or domestic earthquakes, family relations have suffered no disastrous changes, and the men of the States where women vote furnish the strongest testimony in favour of woman suffrage.

There is no more striking illustration of the progress that has been made by woman than that afforded by her changed position in the Church. Under the old *régime* the Quakers were the only sect who recognised the equality of women. Other denominations enforced the command of St Paul, that women should keep silence in the churches. A few allowed the women to lift up their voices in class and prayer meetings, but they had no vote in matters of Church government. Even the missionary and charity work was in the hands of men.

Now the Unitarians, Universalists, Congregationalists, Wesleyan and Protestant Methodists, Christians, Free-Will Baptists, and possibly a few others ordain women as ministers, and many parishes in all parts of the country are presided over by women preachers. The charitable and missionary work of the churches is practically turned over to women, who raise and disburse immense sums of money.

By far the larger part of the progressive movements just enumerated have taken place during the last 25 years, and the progress has been most rapid during the last half of this quarter of a century. The hardest of the battles have been fought, and, while there is still need for both generals and soldiers, the greatest necessity is for the body of women to take possession and hold the ground that has been won. While by

the momentum already gained the reforms demanded would eventually come, women have learned the value of organisation and united systematic work in securing the best and speediest results. It is no longer necessary to make an effort for further educational facilities. The few universities which still close their doors to women will ultimately be compelled to open them by the exigencies of the situation. There are no longer any fences around the industrial field, although men will continue to have the best pickings in the pasture so long as women are disfranchised.

From that little Convention at Seneca Falls we have now the great National Association, with headquarters in New York City, and auxiliaries in almost every State in the Union. As evidence of the progress of public opinion, more than half of the Legislatures in session, during the past winter, have discussed and voted upon Bills for the enfranchisement of women, and in most of them they were adopted by one branch and lost by a very small majority in the other. No one who makes a careful study of this question can help but believe that, in a very few years, all the States west of the Mississippi River will have enfranchised their women. While the efforts of each State are concentrated upon its own Legislature, all of the States combined in the national organisation are directing their energies towards securing a Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The demands of this body have been received with respectful and encouraging attention from Congress.

Until woman has obtained "that right protective of all other rights—the ballot," this agitation must still go on, absorbing the time and the energy of our best and strongest women. Who can measure the advantages that would result if the magnificent abilities of these women could be devoted to the needs of government, society, home, instead of being consumed in the struggle to obtain their birthright of individual freedom? Until this be gained we can never know, we cannot even prophesy, the capacity and power of woman for the uplifting of humanity. It may be delayed longer than we think, it may be here sooner than we expect, but the day will come when man will recognise woman as his peer, not only at the fireside, but in the councils of the nation. Then, and not until then, will there be the perfect comradeship, the ideal union between the sexes, that shall result in the highest development of the race. What this shall be we may not attempt to define, but this we know, that only good can come to the individual or to the nation through the rendering of exact justice.

## The Position of Women in regard to the Political Franchise in Germany.

Fräulein Anita Augspurg, Dr Jur. (Germany).

WHAT I have to tell you about parliamentary enfranchisement of women in my country is, I am sorry to say, rather of theoretical than of practical value, although matters are not quite so bad as they are generally considered. We must distinguish parliamentary enfranchisement for the empire from that for the single States of Germany, which means for the Reichstag and the various houses of delegates. The text of our German Constitution reads as if it did not absolutely reject women as electors, rather the contrary. It says that "every German" above 25 years has the right of voting, and though the masculine form is used, a restriction could not be made out of this, because all our official documents use that form, even if they decidedly refer to a woman. Besides that, all our laws use the masculine form for both sexes, and a decision that only male persons are meant by our electoral laws, founded on no other argument than the grammatical text, would involve that, for instance, our penal code could not be applied to women criminals, or our laws referring to tax-paying to women proprietors.

But even the text of the succeeding clauses referring to cases where the right of voting is suspended or lost are open to an interpretation in favour of women. They only speak of "persons" under guardianship, "persons" in bankruptcy, etc.

So we would have a good chance to prove in a lawsuit—independent and impartial judges supposed—that the literal text of our Constitution implies the right of women to vote, as well as their right in many other things that are nevertheless barred to them. Yet I would not urge my countrywomen to try a legal pursuit on these grounds, because—as the experience of our English and our French sisters in the same case taught us—independent and impartial judges would be wanting. *La raison d'état* would be posed, I am quite sure, above juridic and logical rules and arguments, and the fear to establish a precedent of the first importance would influence the sentence in a high degree. The last argument, however, the weight of precedent, is what also must prevent those few women who otherwise would be eager to claim their rights from risking the trial to procure a

legal sentence on the subject. They deem it wiser to confine themselves to efforts to rouse the other women to become conscious of and anxious for their latent rights, rather than awake the opposition of men, who might easily seize an opportunity of sharpening the electoral laws against any invasion of the other sex as long as they could be quite sure of the decisive support of public opinion.

It is another matter with the enfranchisement for our States, Parliaments or Landtage. The voting for them very often is combined with the franchise concerning local bodies, and in this way a great many German women are entitled to take part in the respective elections without being aware of it. It is, of course, impossible to examine within this short paper the 25 single constitutions of our German United States; nor would it be of any interest to state all the differing particulars of them. I think it sufficient to assure you that women in Germany *have* parliamentary rights, and, indeed, I would be very glad to see them turn from theory to practice while I am alive. The first fact that makes me urge that we are entitled to exercise the franchise is the same as that beforementioned—the text of the respective laws. In Prussia this fact is very clear, as it is supported by a supplementary paragraph of the Prussian Code, saying (Part I., Title 1, sec. 24), “The rights of the two sexes are equal, as far as no special laws fix an exception.” I never found an exception proclaimed in the Prussian Constitution, as it gives the parliamentary enfranchisement to *everyone* who enjoys the county or burgess franchise; and the exceptions are rare even in the by-laws of commons, fixing the ability for local elections, though there are some among these latter which particularly exclude women. Others, however, literally mention that women, as proprietors to a certain degree, may act as electors, either with the restriction “through a proxy” or without it. In the towns there is at least one class of women who, according to the Prussian Städteordnung, is entirely capable of partaking in the elections of their Local Government. It comprises the teachers of public schools, and the rights attaching to their position as States magistrates cannot be disputed with them, having too often been recognised. Such teachers cannot therefore be robbed of their right of franchise, however inconvenient it might turn out for the public taste. Only it is a pity that official discipline supplies so many ways to smother the inconvenient demonstration of an independence established under other circumstances. This consideration may restrain many of our public teachers from claiming



a right that they have a title to, and the worth of which they fully realise.

We have some other constitutions, especially in Southern Germany, including Austria, which give considerable parliamentary rights to women. I should be very glad if it were provided that one of our friends from Austria should give us reports from her country, where female enfranchisement is, in fact, recognised to a certain degree; but I am rather sorry to add that, as far as I know, the practice is scarcely more advanced in Austria than with us in Germany. Our task is to bring our whole sex up to realise the worth of political rights, and to make them claim them with the full ardour and vigour that ought to be bestowed on this aim, as not only the end of our whole movement, but of the cultural progress of mankind. As yet there are not many in Germany who are entirely up to the mark. A rather large number of our women declare political rights to be the *end* of our endeavours, but there is only a small minority who understand that women's suffrage is the very *beginning of our work*, for all our labour for human society remains abortive so long as it is not founded on firm legal terms, unchangeable by protection or favours. But although, as Goethe says, "it is always an honour to belong to the minority," it implies hard work to face the reluctance and even antagonism of the majority, consisting of opponents and so-called friends. Yet we move on, nevertheless.

*[The announcement that the Hon. Mrs Montgomery Moore (Great Britain) would read a paper written on behalf of the Women's Anti-Suffrage Society of the State of New York by its President was received with marks of disfavour. On an appeal from the Chairman, however, for a fair hearing, the paper was proceeded with. The paper was signed by Mrs Francis M. Scott and Mrs J. Elliott Cabot.]*

## The Why and Wherefore of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the State of New York.

It has been deemed fitting that the women in the United States of America, who have concerned themselves in opposing the extension of the suffrage to their sex, should be represented in this gathering.

As there is in England a strong body, who with us are convinced that the betterment of society, either politically or socially, is not to be achieved by such an extension, we have chosen that they should deliver our message for us. That they graciously do so is another proof given by this Congress of the unity and sympathy which bind us together as women. The development of our sex is what we are all working for along our different lines. Differences of opinion as to those lines of work only give occasion for that temperate discussion which healthfully quickens every cause. Our contribution to this discussion of the suffrage will be a brief history of the opposition movement in the United States, and an equally brief statement of our position and our reasons therefor.

Almost, if not quite, co-existent with the active struggle for the extension of the suffrage to women, which began about 50 years ago, there had been a quiet but persistent opposition to that movement on the part of the women who believed that the highest and best progress was not to be attained through political equality. The two forces met year after year, the suffragists retiring defeated, but never disheartened, after each encounter.

There were many matters, and some still remain, in which the laws were specially unequal toward women, and active suffragists have frequently been associated with public-spirited men and women, unaffiliated with the suffrage movement, in bringing about the gradual reforms which have taken place in various States in woman's legal status. Because of their long association with the lecture platform, and the general use of the lecture as a means of instruction in our country, these earnest and sincere suffragists established a considerable reputation which seemed to imply a more widespread indorsement of their opinions than had existed at any time. It was not, however, until 1894 and 1895 that the suffrage agitation in the States of New York and Massachusetts became clamorous enough to demand action. The women agitating for the suffrage, which, with us, means universal suffrage, without qualification of any kind, and excepting only criminals and idiots, assumed the privilege of speaking for all women, and we, feeling profoundly that such a position was without warrant, and being convinced that a great silent majority of women was opposed to such an assumption, formed associations opposed to the extension of the suffrage to women, and defeated the amendment offered for the consideration of the Constitutional Convention of New York in 1894. A victory was also won in 1895 in the adverse vote

by the people of Massachusetts on the question, "Is Woman Suffrage Expedient?" Other States rapidly followed the example of New York and Massachusetts. Iowa, Illinois and Washington have formed organisations, and in many other States there is partial organisation.

It has been difficult to convince quiet and conservative women that organisation, which by its publicity did violence to their lives and traditions, was really necessary; and it has been no part of our work to institute an active propaganda for public persuasion and debate. But wherever the work of the suffragists is particularly active, there we reach the women who silently oppose, and give them what help we can to make their opposition known in the quarters necessary to accomplish the defeat of suffragist effort. So much for the history of our organisation. Now a word as to why such organisation exists at all.

The fact that we are represented here, in a Congress called together for the express purpose of considering the woman question as a whole, is a profession on our part of a share in that great work; and it is because the part of the question with which we are identified is important to that whole, that we welcome the courteous invitation to place ourselves on record here.

The fact of sex, its influences and its consequences, is the guide to every question to be considered by this Council. In accordance with the laws of nature the differentiation of the sexes had been determined, and cannot be altered by man or evolution. This scientific attitude must be conceded. The two sexes in the human species are fixed types, and anything interfering with the essential line of difference which had ever existed cannot be considered as progress in the right direction. We *all* wish to cultivate our womanhood to its perfect development. Every step taken toward that end should be welcomed. Every step which leads away from it should be opposed. This, then, is the vital principle of our opposition. The ballot, at the present time, *implies service to the State, which women may not give and retain unimpaired their place in the social economy.*

The ballot implies military service, police duty, jury duty, the holding of public office, the sharing in the public deliberations regarding the formation of the laws, and membership in the body which finally passed the laws.

The great majority of men and women marry, and we therefore consider this question from the point of view of this majority. Some of the considerations which follow apply to *all* men and *all* women because of their physiological differences,

some again apply only to that large majority of the married above mentioned.

Some few exceptional women have performed military duty, but it would have to be a person both daring and ignorant who would insist that a woman could perform such work without an expenditure of strength out of all proportion to the value of her service. The years of military service—from 18 to 40—are the years when women are prepared by nature to be mothers, and are therefore, because of their very womanhood, whether they become mothers or not, unfitted for the service for which men are specially fitted during the same period of their lives.

The same argument can be used against *police duty*, which in some respects is a similar service. Moreover, the term "military service" does not cover the whole issue. Civil government must rest for its secure and progressive action upon the power of law-makers to enforce their own laws. This power, which is at the last physical force, only men possess. If a representative government admitted to the franchise those who cannot protect the laws they may decree, that government had no security that such would-be decrees will ever become laws. Nobody can promise that, should they become laws, they will ever be defended or obeyed. The ballot is only the method used to find out the effective majority.

It will therefore be seen that the very question of popular self-government is at stake in this matter of woman suffrage. And it may further be seen that woman is not excluded from the constitutional ballot by man, but is prohibited by nature and civilised usage from this final act whose decisions she cannot support. It will also be made evident that woman is thus, with dignity, left free to do her natural share in the progress of her country as well as of her sex.

*Jury duty* has for its drawback the enforced absence of a woman from her home, where her imperative duty lies, and this practical objection would also interfere with her pursuing the other callings mentioned. Fatherhood interferes with the pursuit of none of these callings, but, on the contrary, these callings give the father a means of supporting and educating his children. But motherhood does interfere with duties outside the home, and just so far as that home is threatened or disturbed just so far will the race grow less rapidly toward perfect womanhood and manhood.

Two points remain to be considered—First, the claim that the

woman of wealth and the wage-earning woman should have the ballot; governments have always held the right to extend the suffrage gradually, and on lines where the welfare of the community required it; second, the suffrage question should not be confounded with the principle of "no taxation without representation," since while the one involves obligations contrary to the laws of sex, and is therefore inadmissible, the other may admit of consideration and of qualified extension when circumstances demand it.

With regard to the wonderful economic advance of women and their growing demand for a more general equality in wages and labour returns, we would point to the wage-earning man who, although possessed of the privilege and duty of voting, can compel the capitalist to a recognition of the rights of the wage-earner, not through the ballot, but only organisation sufficiently strong to successfully demand such recognition, and we would assert our belief that only through such organisation of labour, through the faithful work of self-supporting women pioneers, and the educating influence of a humane and scientific sociology, can real relief come to the problem of the self-supporting.

We have purposely avoided the comparison of *mental attributes*, and the discussion of whether or no the emotional and intuitive nature of woman makes her more or less valuable as an active or deliberative coadjutor.

*The physiological aspect is the kernel of this question.* No possible future conditions can ever alter the physiological differences between the sexes. Granting every claim of the suffragists, these natural differences must ever remain. Once the incontrovertible and unalterable fact of physical limitation is faced and acknowledged, all the plausible arguments which have grown up about this question of the suffrage, obscuring its inmost meaning, fall away.

At present women with special talents have, as the result of the work of broad-minded men and women, a full opportunity to educate themselves, and there is no channel which the higher education has opened in which we are not glad to see them turn their energies. We have physicians, lawyers, professors, mathematicians and astronomers who are women. No use of the ballot by women has been necessary to accomplish this, although the progress has seemed slow to those who do not realise how gradual such changes must always be. The change is accomplished, however, and there are no restrictions placed upon woman's educational development, which may now be carried forward just as far as her natural ability will take her. All this is that which

we desire, for which we have worked in the past, and to which we shall devote time and thought in the future. Every privilege should be shared by men and women, but the ballot is not a privilege. It is an obligation calling for the performance of certain duties of the State which require the physical strength belonging to men. If women seek to assume these duties, they ignore the physiological line of distinction between men and women, and the result bears directly and disastrously on the qualities affecting the home life and its duties.

*These duties in the economic life of the State are of equal importance with the duties specifically demanded of men.*

If we devote ourselves to these duties, we shall seek to perfect our womanhood by every aid of education and experience—learn to be ideal wives, to be mothers to their own and all other children, reach out the hand of fellowship to every striving human creature, work for the broadening of every channel through which enlightenment may flow, give our men helpful counsel, work with them and not against them. We shall intelligently interest ourselves and others in public affairs, and arouse public opinion against wrongdoing; be quick to see and to support every wise movement toward the higher development of the State. Thus, in place of a futile and unnatural struggle, we, through a wise philosophy of life serenely followed, seeing the whole and not merely a part, shall tread the path which, as women, we have chosen—the path pointed out by the finger of Science, and to which we turn our faces with a valiant hope.

## The Woman-Suffrage Movement in Norway.

Froken Gina Krog (Norway).

THE Norwegian Constitution dates from the year 1814. It was given at Eidsvold on the 17th of May. Representatives from towns and counties met there. These men were inspired with liberal and patriotic ideas. They placed the chief power in the hands of the people itself; gave to its King only a suspended veto; founded a Parliament without a "House of Lords." As to suffrage, they made it dependent on property and position.

The country has prospered as to education and material and intellectual power. Still much is wanting in the people's

education. As in other countries, the heart has not kept pace with the head, and there are still many disorders, even if they are not so jarring as in the great countries. We are still at a loss how to battle with human wretchedness, and the most elementary questions are still unsolved.

The principal reason is, in my opinion, that our legislators and rulers have forgotten half the population—have forgotten the women—have ignored their mothers, sisters, wives, daughters; have not forgotten to charge them with duties and with taxes, but have forgotten to treat them as equals and to give them civil rights.

The parliamentary suffrage has been extended until all men who are not criminals and lunatics have the right to vote.

The Norwegian women have that right only in the case of certain regulations as to the sale of liquor in each community. They have not even so much as municipal suffrage. Still, they have a faint hope of getting it ere long. No less than seven different Bills relating to it have been brought before the House lately. From the Parliament these have been sent to the Government, and if the Government will take this matter in hand, the Reform Bill will probably be passed.

For the passing of this law only a bare majority was required, while for the parliamentary suffrage a two-thirds majority was required, as it involved an amendment in the Constitution. It was the question of this large majority which would make the parliamentary vote so difficult for them to obtain. Before the 76 members out of the 114 composing their Parliament would vote for us, many prejudices must be overcome.

I have said that their rulers had forgotten woman's existence. I do not mean to say that their brains were not clear now and then on this point; and if it were my present task to speak about the Norwegian women's position generally, I should have a long list of bright instances to enumerate, from the year 1854, when the right of inheritance was made the same for men and women, till the year 1892, when our only university was opened to women as students with the same privileges as men.

The public schools, with compulsory education, give the same advantages to boys and girls, and the girls at first stand on equal terms with the boys; but later on, as women, they fall back in intellectual development. In my opinion, the principal reason is that they are hindered in taking part, and consequently lack interest, in public life.

Seeing that women were so entirely ignored as to parlia-

mentary franchise, some women resolved at last to remind our brothers of our existence. In 1885 we formed a society for women's suffrage, its purpose being to obtain parliamentary franchise for women on the same terms as those on which it is extended to men. One of our members of Parliament took upon himself to bring up a Bill. Bills of constitutional importance have to be brought up and be referred to in one of the triennial parliamentary periods, for discussion in the next period. For this reason the Bill was not debated till June 1890.

The conditions for men's suffrage still depended on property and taxes. If the Bill had then been passed, it would have given only a few women the right of voting, as married women who have not property in their own right are not taxed.

There was a warm dispute in our Parliament on that first occasion. It was the "great deluge coming," said one of the bishops of our Church present. It was seen, however, that our cause had also gifted supporters in the Parliament. When it came to division, 44 out of the 114 members voted for the amendment. The next time the Bill was debated in our *Storting* (Parliament) in June 1893, 58 members voted in favour of it; and the third time, in May 1895, it obtained 54 votes.

As will be seen, matters looked best in 1893. There was then a majority for the Bill, but not the two-thirds majority required. That the Bill failed to obtain as many votes in 1895 was because of the Liberal party being returned in less number. It is a peculiarity to our country that no Conservative members have voted for this amendment in our Constitution.

Meanwhile the Norwegian women have tried to express their claims by the aid of petitions, meetings, etc.; still, not in so great a number and with such energy as could be wished. As things were, we could not complain much of our Parliament's relation to our cause up to this time, and we were grateful to the Liberal party for its support of the Bill.

The theoretical objections against the cause were also lessening; at all events it was considered want of taste to use such expressions in debating as formerly. We had a great hope to see ere long some women in possession of the vote.

But the political situation changed, and the prospects for a near issue have darkened deeply.

As before mentioned, Norway and Sweden were united under one king on the basis of equal position, keeping the liberty and rights that the Constitution had given. Nevertheless, the union of the two kingdoms led to difficult crises in our political life.



It has cost our country much toil and labour to keep its independent position on a level with its development. In the case of foreign representation especially, vexations and controversies have arisen which have caused a strong party strife within our country, and this has also influenced the women's cause. The Liberal party, which has been the most eager to maintain the country's national independency, has at the same time had as its aim universal suffrage (manhood's suffrage); the fervent struggle for our national cause has forwarded the extension of suffrage to men, and has distanced the claims of women. Even the Liberals, hitherto our only supporters, have now commenced to ignore us. In 1897 the Liberals were returned with so large a majority that they were able of themselves to make amendments in the Constitution. This power they made use of to grant common parliamentary suffrage to men, whilst only 33 representatives were willing to remove the political disabilities of women.

The Bill cannot again be brought before the House till the next parliamentary session, 1900-1903. And there is little hope of having it passed in that period. If in the meantime women get the municipal vote, I am afraid our legislators would let our apprenticeship last long before they would trust us with more. Bills are, however, secured, and would be debated in the next period—several Bills, indeed, founded on different principles.

The changed political relations had also influenced the women suffragists, and had caused a split among them. Impatient at not obtaining even the least result, the existing suffrage society resolved to try new tactics and demand suffrage, if not on the same terms as it is extended to men, then for some privileged groups of women. The consequences of this was that a new women's suffrage society was founded on the old tactics, a nationally organised society that maintained the old claims of suffrage for women on the same terms as it is given to men, and which will not work for anything less than this: justice and equal position, these claims being in the opinion of the society the only permissible weapons when fighting against injustice and subjection.

I am inclined to think that the parliamentary vote would not at first be given to a few women in particular. They would all have it as soon as they had struggled long enough to obtain it.

These divergent opinions had, however, brought life and development and impetus to the work. Whilst greater indifference than formerly had been traced among the politicians as to woman's suffrage, there were signs of awakening life among

women themselves over the whole country, and we hope this will at last abolish indifference, and induce women to hold fast together, and though working under different flags, to unite for our great cause.

## The Political Position of Women in Switzerland.

Mlle. de Mülinen (Switzerland).

It is only a small country of whose proceedings I have to speak, and if Switzerland had not from her very beginning stood up for political liberty, and had not for centuries fought and struggled for this her treasure, her jewel, and sole *raison d'être*, I should hardly venture to call attention to so modest a part of the world. But since the days of William Tell the Swiss nation has been recognised as one which dared all and sacrificed all to her political freedom, and to the right of self-government. It was not so much personal, individual liberty that the Swiss loved and craved for. English and American people possess a much larger share of personal liberty than the Swiss. It is only political freedom—the liberty to be all of them eligible as electors, without which the men of the Swiss nation could not and would not live. Strange to say that such being the state of mind of the male citizen, Swiss women should never have demanded suffrage. We behold in Switzerland the curious fact that, while the men lived and died for their liberties, the women were not only utterly deprived of these, but cared, on the whole, but little for the vote. How is this? How can we explain this in a highly cultivated people, a people proud of its public schools and generally widespread culture? Why do Swiss women not yearn in their turn for the privilege they see so highly prized by the men? As I understand it, the fact has but one explanation. Swiss women had shared the benefit of political liberty by and through the men; their fathers, husbands brothers and sons were free from all thralldom; they held their heads erect and spoke their opinions like the free men they were. Women did not suffer with their men as those of other nations did, and proud to belong to such a race, they resigned themselves to their restrictions, and did not ask for more. They illustrate the opinion many men would urge on us,

i.e., that women are duly and wholly represented by men, and should not want more.

Now, however, the still small voice proclaiming the priceless value of individuality and its duties has been heard in Switzerland, and threatens to become the storm and whirlwind, shattering to pieces the foundations of ancient laws and customs. Slowly but surely our women are awakening and preparing for a new and fuller life.

The last shall be first. In the canton of Tessin, the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, where the people were more ignorant and undeveloped than in any other part of the country, women even now vote instead of their husbands during the whole summertime. The Tessinesi migrate like the Italians during half the year, and return to their homes only in winter. While they are absent, their wives go for them to the polls, and vote in their place; they do so quietly, silently, and never has anyone found fault with this institution. It is only "representing" the other way, you will say. True, but where there is equity and reciprocity, justice surely is not far off.

In the canton of Vaud, with Lausanne for its capital, we have seen another light shine of late, and this a very unexpected one. The Free Church of Vaud had given to women the right to vote at the elections of pastors and clergymen. Only recently they heard what a very good choice had been made in the parish of Lausanne, and that a noble and true man owes his election as pastor of this large district in a great extent to the vote of women. The National Church in Lausanne also had intended to confer the vote on women, and had let the motion drop only for a time. It is a very striking fact, and one that might well rejoice our hearts, that their Free Church, a bulwark of orthodoxy and Bible-faith, had been led to the conviction of women's right to choose their preachers and the religious teacher of their children. For centuries they had heard the cry throughout the Church, "*Mulier taceat in ecclesia*," and some misunderstood and misapplied Bible sentences about woman's position in the Church and towards her husband had been for ages past an interdict to woman, and the means of retarding her full development. It is no small thing, then, that out of the midst of earnest, God-fearing people the necessity of woman's liberation is making itself felt, for almost the whole mass of our conscientious, dutiful women is under the influence of these Bible quotations, yet

what should we do if we did not at length succeed in securing them on our side? Another remarkable evidence of the progress the suffrage question has made in my country lay in the fact that one of our best-known statesmen publicly acknowledged its justness and necessity. Professor Dr Carl Hiltz, an eminent jurist at the University of Bern, member of our National Parliament, a very popular man and writer, published two years ago, in his *Political Yearbook of the Swiss Confederation*, an important article on Women's Suffrage, in which he advocates woman's entire enfranchisement on the strongest grounds available. He does not see, so he frankly declares, what impediment there could be to woman's freedom, either on the grounds of a fictive or assumed natural inferiority, or on those of inexpediency in practical domains. On the contrary, he expects great and sure progress to follow the rehabilitation of one half of humanity to the rights she has been hitherto deprived of. Woman's natural endowments, he says, have not been proved smaller than man's, and her capacities of development are as endless as his. There is, in his opinion, no reason whatever why women should not be electors as well as eligible to any public office, and he urges my countrymen very earnestly to follow the example of the State of Wyoming, and so to range among the first civilised States introducing woman's enfranchisement into the world.

Dr Hiltz goes even so far as to say that all endeavours of women to better their condition, to obtain more equitable laws, and to secure certain rights, will prove entirely illusive, so long as the legislative body consists only of men, who may retract any day the laws and concessions they granted on a former occasion.

While seeing the whole force of this argument, we women of Switzerland are resolved upon taking another course, and mean to plead to be eligible before we ask to be electors. We feel that we must educate ourselves for political life, must be fit before we enter upon the arena, and therefore we turn all our endeavours towards being admitted to the school boards, and partaking in the management of public institutions of all kinds. Our ability to do public work, without ceasing to be true women, once proved and recognised, we feel sure that the suffrage question will resolve itself, and women's vote will, by degrees, enter quietly into our national life.

The general surprise Professor Hiltz caused in Switzerland by advocating woman's freedom was great, but it was followed by no opposition and no feud in the press, and a superficial on-

looker might well assume that this was either due to the conspiracy of silence, or that Hiltz's apology had made no impression. Yet a close observer may notice how the tone in periodicals and newspapers, whenever the question was now touched, had altered and become reserved and courteous instead of derisive and scornful. The number of men on our side is rapidly, though silently, increasing.

After alluding to some other difficulties, Mlle. de Mülinen said, in conclusion, that she desired to express one great hope. There had been many gifted, high-minded, world-renowned women in all ages, from the days of the prophetesses and sibyls down to Hypatia and the philosophers of the Renaissance. But they had done little or nothing for the elevation of their own sex, but had allowed themselves to be isolated, had listened to the voice of the tempter telling them that they were beings apart, more like men than ordinary women. Then, falling into the snare of isolation, they had proved themselves unable to raise up womanhood. Mlle. de Mülinen trusted that the women of the present age would be saved from this error, and believed that the granting of universal suffrage to women, without limitation of property, would raise all women alike, would teach them co-operation through the bond of civic and political duties, and, through causing them to reflect on the welfare of the whole people, would enlarge their aims and cause them to devote themselves to work for the common good.

## The Woman-Suffrage Movement in Holland.

Mme. A. W. L. Versluis-Poelman (Holland).

As a representative of a small country and a small nation, whose doings do not greatly influence the course of the world's history, and on which, therefore, little is said or written abroad, whose language, moreover, is not understood by any other people, so that our daily papers and periodicals are not read by others, I stand a good chance to say something that is not known yet to all my hearers if I relate what is particular to the struggle for women's suffrage in our small Holland. So far as I know,

there is no country where woman has the same kind of difficulties to overcome for her political liberties as in Holland. We women of Holland started the struggle for our rights later than our sisters in England and in America. Whether we were in better condition, or whether the well-known consideration and moderation of the Dutchmen also extended to the women of the country, I know not, but it is a dead certainty that about 28 years ago very little was thought with us about equalisation of man and woman. The first woman who, in our country, studied at the university and took the degree of doctor of medicine—Dr Aletta Jacobs—belonged to the pioneers, to the first, at least, who gave expression to their opinions, and she was (perhaps) the very first who claimed complete equalisation of man and woman. She, the woman who provided for herself, who fulfilled all the duties required of the citizens with complete rights of citizenship, felt the injustice of being excluded from the influences on government and legislation. And why should this exclusion last any longer? Was not she excluded by her own free will and her own fault? Was it not simply a result of her lukewarmness, her indifference, her want of self-consciousness, her lack of self-esteem, that the Dutch woman did not make her voice heard in the matter of legislation? For the law did not say anything about the exclusion of woman. Our Constitution only said, "Electors are all Dutchmen," etc. The woman certainly was a Hollander, too, and Dr Jacobs thought, provided she paid as much for taxes as was required of the Dutch voter, she only needed her name entered on the registration lists in order to be an elector too. And she did accordingly. She applied to the municipal government of Amsterdam, where she lived, for her registration as an elector. When they set their eyes on such an extraordinary request, the gentlemen were dumb-stricken with astonishment. The petition was refused, because, although the law did not literally speak of men, it certainly could not have meant women. The higher authorities, to whom Dr Jacobs then appealed, maintained the judgment, supporting it with all kinds of narrow-minded reasons. Dr Jacobs did not obtain the right of election, however useful a member of society she was, and although she paid her rates and taxes. Still, it was clearly felt that such principles would not hold long. It was also understood that a time might come when many women would claim the very same thing, and then it could not seriously be maintained that Dutch women were not Hollanders. In 1887 the

Fundamental Law was revised; there was no such law in England, a law to which all other laws must correspond, and which cannot be altered without grave deliberations and a good deal of formality. The States-General, for instance, are dissolved after such a revision, and fresh elections must be held. In 1887, when the king was old and ill, such a revision was fully justified for the arrangement of the regency and the succession to the throne. But what was not justified, and yet happened, was that the Constitution was also altered with regard to the right of election, and that henceforward all *male* Hollanders only could be electors when they satisfied certain requirements.

This is the particular thing in our country to which I have alluded. For, in fact, I believe that such a thing does not exist anywhere else, nor ever did. It is true that everywhere in the old-established States people hesitate to do away with the obstacles that separate woman from the poll—but that new obstacles should be raised is really too bad.

The evil done in that fatal year, 1887, is greater and stronger than we ever supposed. For a few years the women of Holland had been organising and taking a lively part in all questions of an economical and political nature. Our support had often been desired because women are, as a rule, strongly devoted to what they undertake, and given up to it heart and soul. So they have made many friends among the men of a progressive tendency. The Socialists have taken revision of the Constitution as a main point on their programme, in order to obtain universal suffrage for all men and all women. As this was the only party that unmistakably expressed itself on this matter, there would, of course, be a good chance of the women joining that party if they had not by experience learned to be on their guard. The other parties, however, which would also be glad to dispose of the struggling capacities of the women, now count among their members many supporters of women's suffrage, but who, to their very deep regret, cannot work for it at present on account of the Constitution. The Constitution excluded woman, and to the question whether they cannot work in the first place for revision of it, they are always ready to express their profound regret, but point out that revision of the Constitution is such a trouble and causes such a great agitation, they could not at present expose the nation to such a thing! The solution of other important questions might be delayed by it, and that would *never do*! The gentlemen then forgot that they locked the cupboard themselves, putting the key into their pocket, and that women understand

very well they do not *want* to open it. But why, it might be asked, did they not join the Socialist party, which would, according to their programme, exactly suit them as an ally?

Ah, well, but they do not get on any better with the Socialists. Properly speaking, the independent movement of the women only arose through the disappointment which they received at the hands of the Socialists. And though their party had greatly altered since the time when the union for women's suffrage was established, their views on that point had been quite the same. It was true they were, as they said, willing to procure the right of election for the women, but not before every man, down to the tramp, had obtained that right.

The rule in the Constitution to which I have referred might be troublesome, yet it has not harmed the women's capacities of fighting at all; it has taught them not to rely too much on nice promises, nor to believe in them too soon. It has taught them to understand that very few men are, in reality, sufficiently above the prejudice of sex to support and assist them in perfect good faith. It has taught them to know their own worth, as they had always been flattered when people wanted to avail themselves of their zeal and eloquence, but sometimes let it out that exactly these qualities might, in case of equalisation of man and woman, lead to a preponderance of woman's influence.

Nowhere else in the world, perhaps, have women had such a good opportunity of experiencing the fact that no corporations of men, but only individual men, would assist them in good faith, as in Holland; and on account of the extraordinary way in which the women's affair has been treated, a body has been organised of women who know clearly and distinctly why they would see women's suffrage precede universal men's suffrage and all sorts of reforms. The corporation, confined by the struggle, has got over the period commonly experienced by the first struggles, the first period that every individual has to go through—the time when the *rights* of women were the only thing to think about. The young woman, feeling wronged and humbled, is selfish, and contends with ardour and zeal for her own rights; the composed woman of riper age knows that she does not herself suffer most by her humiliation. Likewise, the young movement gave, at its first appearance, the impression of egoism, and struggling for as many rights as man had, without considering the interests of the whole society. The mature, the settled movement understands that woman ought to have an influence on the government of State and society, because society—the



great family—cannot stand on a sound basis if man and woman are not (as in the little family consisting of father, mother and children) in the equal conditions of father and mother here also. And such a mature movement need not lose anything of life and ardour and strength, but should, on the contrary, gain in perseverance, in energy, in durability, in unity of will and aim. It puts to itself the question, "What have I to do to win the struggle against men's prejudices?" (for it knows that it is not a struggle against men, but against their prejudices); and the answer is obvious—"Educate the future man in such a manner that he has no prejudices at all." This is the very simple and decisive answer, one that, through its very nature, excludes all haste and eagerness. But it also contains the necessity that woman has to make herself independent of man in order to have the right to educate her children as she liked. It implies that woman, either married or single, should be economically independent, that therefore she must fight for teaching and professional training, as good as man enjoys, that she must see all professions were opened to her. The Dutch women who strove for the right of election knew this, and hoped that the National Women's Council would be the means of putting an end to the prejudices which many women entertained against it, seeing in it something unwomanly and the expression of a hatred of men. The Dutch women once more were on the eve of a struggle for universal suffrage; if only the men who had set this movement on foot kept their promises and warranted the women that no suffrage should be called universal that excluded *them*. The strugglers for the right of election would stand much in need of support and sympathy, and they hoped that this would be granted them amply by their sisters who, in the National and the International Council, might have learnt to appreciate them.

#### DISCUSSION.

Miss Florence Balgarnie (Great Britain) dealt chiefly with the paper read in opposition to the movement. Miss Balgarnie complained that the personal or womanly element had been made too much off. What they were doing was for the benefit of humanity at large. In Mrs Francis W. Scott's paper no alternative was submitted; the writer apparently thinking with Pope that "whatever is, is right." Now that freedom had been granted to man, woman claimed to be governed on similar lines, and it was absurd to think that because their sex were not fitted to

serve in the navy, army or the police, that they were not able to assist in law-making and law-keeping.

**Mrs Wolstenholme Elmy** (Great Britain) said they were fighting for the cause of woman, but if they accepted freedom as a privilege they admitted that those who gave it to them had the right to take it away.

**Mrs Maclaverty** submitted that motherhood ought to imply citizenship. It had been said that woman was too holy to be sullied by being allowed to vote. They all knew what became of the best china; it was put on one side and only looked at. Let them see that they were not served in the same way. They, as women, had the same wishes for freedom as men had, and they were willing to make similar sacrifices for good. They were one with man and would remain so until the end.

The **Hon. Mrs Arthur Lyttelton** expressed disappointment that no new argument had been brought forward against the granting of the franchise to woman, and was astonished to hear that in America it was considered necessary for a man who made law one week to go out the next week and help to enforce it. Strange, indeed, was it that this should be brought forward in an enlightened age, and by a representative of so progressive a country as America, as argument against the extension of franchisement to women.

**Countess Schack** gave graphic particulars of the difficulties encountered by women on the Continent, and certainly touched the right chord in answering the argument that women were not prepared to sacrifice life by going to war by asking what could be nobler than the sacrifices made and the risks run in bringing life into the world as women did?

**Mrs Dockrell** (Ireland) and **Mrs Clara Bewick Colby** (United States) gave expression to numerous opinions; but **Mrs Wynford Philipps** drew attention to the educational side of the question. Women needed better education—i.e., clinical as well as primary—to better prepare them for the struggle which was certain to come.

**Mrs Frances Surney** (Cheltenham) appealed to the meeting to go to the working men for support, for it would be found that they and not the classes were ready to acknowledge that they had been relieved of an injustice by enfranchisement, and the majority of labourers and bread-winners she had met were anxious that similar benefits should be reaped by their wives.

**Rev. Annie Howard Shaw** (United States), **Mrs Sheldon Amos** (London), and **Mrs Bridges Adams** (London) having briefly spoken, the Conference terminated.

# RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE.

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SMALL HALL, ST MARTIN'S TOWN HALL.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, AFTERNOON.

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The COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN in the Chair.

AFTER a few opening remarks from the President, the first paper was read, on

## The Influence of Women in Public Life.

Baroness Alexandra Gripenberg (Finland).

DUTY and right go hand in hand through life. Every right involves a duty, and every duty fulfilled entitles one to a right. In olden times women's duties and rights embraced a comparatively narrow domain. By-and-by this has been extended. It is as if she were formerly rowing her boat on a quiet river, which was now brought her to the open sea. And splendid, grand is the majesty of the sea ; only we must be prepared for the voyage. The opponents to the extension of women's sphere have predicted that the most disastrous results will arise from her direct participation in public life. They have said that women will be bad copies of men, and thus not only lose their former value as women, but also be of no consequence in public life. They will accept all the bad habits of men ; they will be infected with the demoralising atmosphere of public life, and thus become as "the salt that has lost its savour." We have all heard this, and more in the same strain. We have seen that these dismal forebodings have not been fulfilled, but we have also seen that the altered conditions in women's lives bring with them new dangers to her, which she must avoid if she wishes to serve

humanity. If the lady-student in her behaviour does not show that she disapproves of the male student's drinking and bad life; if the lady-doctor, in servile admiration for the stronger sex, accepts the doctrine that a licentious life and immoral habits are necessary for men; if the lady-scientist as servilely degrades herself by using vivisection in all its dreadful forms; if the lady-politician supports her party even in dishonest and unjust actions; if the female ruler of a nation oppresses the weaker, supports injustice and outrage in the politics of her country—then most certainly our opponents will be right. The world will have gained nothing but thousands of bad copies of men, and we shall have worked in vain. What is then needed if women's entrance into public life is to be of value to the community? She must bring with her into it something new—namely, the mother's heart. Woman has, as a mother and a rearer of children, shown that she has deep funds of love, patience, endurance and devotion. She must act in accordance with these qualities also in public life. As a representative of these qualities she is wanted there, and only as she represents them her entrance in public life will be a turning-point in the development of the human race. It is her duty, as the mother and educator, to help to purify and regenerate the community, to see that the relations outside the home, into which relations she must send her children, are not conducted in direct opposition to the principles which she has taught them at home. In all times it has been of the greatest importance to educate women as good and morally strong characters. How much more now when the future promises for women a manifold increase of duties and rights. If she be a reed shaken in the wind, if she be not a morally strong and independent character at the same time as she is developed as an individual—then we shall not have gained our object in the deepest sense of this word.

In the last years insidious voices have been heard, which say—"Women's ethical instincts loosen their power of grasping facts on a broader scale, diminish their ability to think. If women are to be able to take part successfully in public life, they must accept the same moral laws and customs in public life as now exist for men. No moral shackles and fetters ought to be put on woman if she is to succeed."

These voices belong to women's worst and most dangerous enemies, even if their owners are friends of suffrage and higher education of women. Better, far better, that these rights had never been heard of than that they should be given to women

who should live and act in accordance with such disastrous principles. Instead of being a power to support the good, woman in such a case would become a means of increasing the evil. And finally, as to shackles and fetters, everyone who has loved something else besides himself knows that love always is a restraint on unlimited liberty. If we love, we must always sacrifice something for our love. And every woman who loves the cause of her sex, who believes that by the realisation of its ideal a better, nobler state of things will be introduced, does not find it hard to put on, in a certain sense, shackles and fetters for the love of her cause. She will not find it hard, because great ideas are wonderful masters. The more we give them, the more they will ask of us, and the more we wish to give them. It is because they are a reflection of God Almighty, and have something of Him—something of the eternal—in them.

## Responsibility of Women as Citizens.

Mrs Fannie Humphreys Gaffney (United States).

RESPONSIBILITY demands and includes authority, therefore the responsibility of women as citizens is limited in some regions, disputed in others, and utterly out of the question of consideration in certain quarters of the globe.

It may be said of the responsibility of women as citizens, as has been said of your noble Victoria, *i.e.*, "The Queen reigns, but the people rule." In other words, the responsibility of citizenship is man's, but woman is responsible none the less.

It is asserted that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link; that is, the possibility always exists that if this weak link gives way, the whole otherwise strong chain falls asunder.

The chain of woman's responsibility is particularly subject to weaker links, by reason of the fact that six-eighths, or, to be entirely safe in my statistics, one-half of the world is still Pagan, Mahometan or Buddhist, and it is needless to dwell upon the irresponsibility of women under these creeds.

'Christianity rescued woman from the slavery of these special conditions, but it left its task unfinished. It placed her a subordinate in that religion of Christ which asserted—

"There is no respect of persons with God,  
Nor bond or free,  
But all one."

Montesquieu says :—

“When man was created he found himself face to face with a being similar to himself—and directly of these two beings there was one of them who owed something to the other, and another to whom something was due. Hence arose immediately right and duty between these two beings, or the first rational intercourse of social life.”

Naturally, in the primitive establishment of human rights, women seem to have been considered as beings to be protected—and according to the spirit and nature of the times rightly so. The hunters, herders and warriors were men—and women the conservers and home-keepers of the race. But the world moved on by century strides, and men began to ally themselves into associations for mutual protection and ruling; and here rests the initial point of the divergence of rights and privileges between the sexes.

Now it is a fact that the collective body or association is the first step toward political or public rights. Here the individual reaches out beyond himself to general affairs. The right of meeting or association, the liberty of the press, learning and the right of petition or public hearing—all these, from primitive days and forms up to the present day, have acted on public affairs, and laid hold on the management of the State. And woman, because of her early seclusion and of the habit of being left out of affairs, was largely and entirely overlooked in these primitive measures for rights.

Later on political rights developed, and as women rarely or never exercised the former privileges, or were expected to do so, it is small wonder that they were never included in political rights.

The right of meeting, liberty of the press and right of petition, were from time to time exercised by women, as these three are the remedies open to citizens not included in political rights; yet it is recorded that more than once these rights have been temporarily, and in some cases permanently, wrested from women.

As late as 1851, in France, a bill was introduced to deny this right of petition to women, as hosts of petitions were flooding the Government. The man presenting the Bill said eloquently, that its passage was a matter of public decency and parliamentary dignity. “What would happen,” said this would-be preserver of the peace, “if a petition should arrive signed in one sense by the husband and in quite another sense by the wife? Which authority and which sex would prevail here?” Which, indeed!

Also in France, during the revolution, in an attempt to debar women from right of public meeting, one Amar said before the Convention :—

“The object of popular association is to unmask the manœuvres of the enemies of the Republic, and to keep an eye on citizens as individuals and on public officers, as well as on the legislative body, and to stimulate the zeal of both by the example of Republican virtues, and to enlighten them by searching public discussion on the defect of the reformation of political laws.”

He then paused to take breath, and asked of his bewildered hearers this question :—“Can women devote themselves to these useful and laborious duties ?”

He then further mystified them by answering the question himself, saying :—“Manifestly women cannot, because of their respective destinations.”

Whatever he may have meant by that—at all events his eloquence or his mystification was destined to remove from woman for a time the right to meeting.

If men were as summarily cut off from the exercise of privilege because certain other men had abused this privilege, where would governments begin or end ?

It may be interesting just here to give an instance of the right of petition, which occurred on the 19th of February 1829, here in England.

Lord Eldon presented a petition signed by several ladies. He apologised for his attempt to bring a petition signed by women before the House, but said that he knew of no precedent either for or against introducing it. As the petition was a remonstrance against measures the ladies considered injurious to the Constitution, perhaps the noble Lords would patiently listen to its reading ; whereupon Lord King facetiously inquired if the ladies signing the document were young or old. Lord Eldon was uncertain as to their ages, but replied with spirit that there were many women who possessed more knowledge of the Constitution and more common sense than some chancellors. King was descended from a chancellor.

To this Lord King responded that he felt certain so able a petition must have been signed by the older women of England.

The history of these days, in the way of statistics, says that millions of women are earning livings, not only for themselves, but to support others, and it is also well known and admitted that legislation does affect, and is frequently invoked to control, labour or business interests. The inter-relation between natural rights

and political rights, always nice to separate at certain points, is being more closely welded or comprehended by the intelligence of each advancing age, and slowly but surely, through this knowledge, woman is being, and is already, largely relieved from the bondage of conditions of anterior date, and is being accorded that "gentle liberty of the higher, wider law."

Plato said long ago, "Many women are better calculated for certain things than many men, nor is their any department of government work which is exclusively adapted for woman as woman, or man as man. But the gifts of nature, being in like manner divided between the sexes, according to nature, man and woman share alike in all occupations, only that in all things woman is the weaker part."

Notwithstanding Plato, diplomatic offices are not yet common among women, nor are women conspicuous or numerous as judges on the bench; but diplomats are moved and helped by women, and we have women lawyers capable of judgeship.

The exclusion—or more fairly putting it, perhaps, the omission—to include woman as a direct factor or personage in natural rights is the primary cause for the lack of responsibility of women as citizens to-day. The right of petition and, equally important, the right of public meeting and assembly being not exercised, and in some cases withheld, forbidden or restricted among women, is another primal cause for the lack of responsibility of women to-day.

In France, up to ten years ago, societies could not be formed numbering more than twenty members for any public discussion of political affairs, without government sanction. In Germany and Austria much the same rules obtain, and in some places women were distinctly forbidden to become members of any such political association. With this exclusion from cumulative public action, either by failure to exercise the right and sometimes by right denied, it is small wonder that woman has not risen to a high degree and a sense of her political responsibility as a citizen.

Freedom of the press, as large as it is to-day, has still up to a late date been in some instances withheld from women by laws musty and out of date. In certain Spanish and Bulgarian quarters to-day, no one can be an editor or publisher unless in full possession of civil and political rights.

Perhaps it may not be inapt for me to call your attention right here to the fact that political rights and natural rights must be considered separately in our argument, however closely



they may seem related in our minds. "Natural or human rights exist for the individual, while political rights, though granted to individuals, do not exist for him, but for citizens in general, or the massed interests of the public. The government is not the personal property of anyone, neither is it a caste privilege, as might seem, being so largely exercised by males; nor is it an hereditary right. Political rights can be and are conferred by the law, interpreting the general interest suitably to the ideas, needs and, we must also admit, the passions and prejudices of the place, time and age in which they are conferred. Thus, looking upon political rights as always conferred, we will see clearly that the concession of political rights will always be determined within the horizon and outlook of a country, and these political or electoral rights, given or withheld as the sentiment of that country obtains."

With this point clearly before our minds, we must admit the fact that no sweeping concession, in any country, has ever given woman full and entire political rights in the same sense as it has accorded them to man. There are individual instances, as States or localities, where such seeming sweeping concessions may have been granted, but my statement, in the broad sense, remains true. The municipal vote so largely extended to women here and elsewhere, and such other advanced rights as have been given her, have never yet reached the broad, significant sense of full, unexplained, unrestricted political rights and their attendant responsibilities, which all goes to prove that men preserve the prejudices of their childhood, their country and their age long after they have recognised all the truth necessary to destroy them.

Notwithstanding all this, we find at intervals, like a golden thread woven in the web of political power, woman's influence; but small indeed is the proportion. Nevertheless, Napoleon banished Mme. de Stäel, and De Goncourt, in his *La Femme au XVIII. Siècle*, says:—"In the eighteenth century woman is the principle that governs, the reason that directs, the voice that commands. She is the universal fatal cause, the origin of events. From one end of the century to the other the government of woman is the sole government to be seen and felt, having the steadiness of purpose and the reality and activity of power."

But no legal sanction was placed upon this power. It just was, evidently for the reason that Rousseau said, i.e. :—"That woman was especially created to please man."

With or without the authority of responsibility, as women to-day we are responsible, and the question for us to answer is, how shall we exercise this responsibility? In our eagerness to be up and doing, to make up for the centuries during which we, as women, have seemingly been blind to our responsibility, we must now move carefully and think deeply. It is not our duty, nor privilege, to turn everything upside down in the hope of getting something right side up. Let us do the thing our hands find to do, and exercise patience and moderation—true God-like patience with the infirmities of the age and moderation in our own desires and ambitions. Not the moderation of inertia and letting things alone, but the moderation that always is the hand-maid of high impulse and noble zeal.

There is a male and female side to all great work, which will not be carried on without the co-operation one of the other. Moreover, the power actually wielded by women is so enormous that if men realise the fact they will in self-defence insist on her being trained and qualified to use it. If even some women, advisedly or unadvisedly, use this tremendous power of influence, they should not be allowed to shirk responsibility. Will not these and all women weigh more carefully and justly, and exercise more wisely, this influence, if they have the knowledge that they may be called to account?

Open responsibility is a needed check to abuse of influence. To give woman responsibility of her opinion and responsibility as a citizen will lift her to deeper thought and wider outlook. What we need as women in this day and hour is the training and discipline to make us use wisely the influence we already have. Power cannot afford to be wasted; it should be gathered, conserved, made responsible.

The signs of the times are sure and fixed—signs of subtle meaning; signs of change of tides, when new economics emerge from chaos and float to our shore demanding responsibility; times of mighty moral influence, when brute force is recognised as a thing of the past, and is replaced by the modern machinery of vital and electric forces of spiritual intelligence, destined in the future to move and govern the world. The responsibility laid upon woman just now is to ameliorate present conditions and make straight the paths for this better future, and she must have strong, practical courage, since her courage is to have peculiar exercise.

The woman of to-day who recognises her responsibility is not called upon to fight brute dragons whom she can outskill, or to

go like the Crusaders to bring back a sacred relic from unbelievers; no, she needs the courage to face the unreported, unhistorical little everyday objections and barriers which are raised against her progress. She must go forth in everyday clothes and fight this battle without pomp or glory. She must speak the word in season and be silent when silence is best, and her only certain weapon, to be used unflinchingly against all protests, is that steady purpose and high morality that consists of more than an occasional dress parade of glittering professions, and she must exercise that loving faith and that courage which challenges custom, and insists upon the rights and needs of the hour and generation. And last of all, and perhaps this needs the deepest courage and the holiest patience, she must meet the inertia and even opposition of her own sex to any departure from existing conditions. That servitude of good women to custom and precedent, that willingness to be guided by any authority outside of their own individual thought and conception, that modest doubt of their own ability, and that exaltation of the power and ability of man as man—these are the little foxes that eat the grapes and test the courage of all women who realise their responsibility as citizens, and that the highest problem for man—meaning woman as well—is the establishment of a universal civil society founded on the empire of complete justice.

Someone has said, "public opinion is the queen of the world," and woman largely contributes to public opinion.

In those ages when the world lay dormant and life was pervaded by a materialism and satisfaction with what was, "the Greek mind rose like a lily from this stagnant pool, and gave forth to the world higher thought and fragrance, lifting the eyes and senses of man to higher and better things."

In this age the plant of woman's power is raising its head above the waters, and the world is lifting its eyes to behold the flower of responsibility bloom thereon—that responsibility which shall inculcate and cherish the highest philosophy, the widest charity, the truest philanthropy; and while adapting these ideals to the time and the everyday world about them, still keeps the fire of enthusiasm alive, which shall kindle for all these projects a brighter and a better future.

## Woman's Part in Politics.

Mrs Arthur Scaife (Canada).

No doubt to many present it may be a revelation to hear that women should have any responsibilities or duties with regard to politics, or in fact that they should take any active interest in political life at all!

I hope that some of my dear unconverted friends and acquaintances are here this afternoon! Those who, on certain occasions, when in ordinary conversation, with the hope of interesting them, I have touched upon some social ethic, have turned a very polite but deaf ear, and talked about the weather, or have persistently argued on the other side (without having considered both). I repeat I hope that some of them are here, for after having spent some hours, nay, some days, some weeks, perhaps, thinking a great many thoughts on one subject, one hopes at least that those thoughts may be better expressed on paper than under the disadvantages of the deaf ear and the weather problem.

Another reason, too—it is so much more interesting to read a paper to opponents. Honest, earnest discussion lends a zest which is refreshing, and there is always the hope of making perhaps one convert to the great cause—the welfare of the community, or, in other words, politics.

It is rather the misfortune than the fault of many women that they do not consider life from a broad standpoint, that their sympathies are limited, that they concern themselves very little with anything outside their own particular centre, and have little, if any, public spirit. Each day in this busy world brings its round of duties, or what we and custom have agreed to call our duties. Having fulfilled them, we sigh contentedly and say, "There is no time for more. Woman's mission is to her home; leave politics to the men! What have we to do with them!"

When women begin to ask themselves this question seriously, and answer it honestly, they will find they have everything to do with them.

Woman's mission *is* to her home. Yes, undeniably yes!—and to faithfully fulfil the varied responsibilities and duties it entails she must be the very best of politicians!

It is impossible to draw a line and sever the connection

between the home life and the political life, and the responsibilities accruing from both and in both to women.

That this statement will be received with surprise I have not very much doubt, but a little reflection will show that it is borne out by facts.

Does the mistress of a well-organised house remain callous to the dangers of defective drainage, an impure water supply, or a poor gas meter? No, her political instinct (the welfare of her community) prompts her to seek immediate redress, and to approach the authorities with complaints that the health not only of her household but of the neighbourhood is menaced.

Let us suppose for the sake of argument that her child attends a Board School, or any other public institution, and she denotes imperfections in the educational methods, or want of discipline and moral tone: should she be silent on these points? On the contrary, it is her duty to get to the root of the matter and find a remedy for the defects.

These and more instances I could mention, had I time, go to prove that women are already greater politicians than they imagine.

And from domestic details to outside details there is no step at all. It is a system of wheels within wheels. Draw deductions from the daily incidents that you encounter, label them for immediate consideration, and you will find yourself confronted with a budget not easily disposed of.

Social questions in their most glaring aspects—

The beggar at your door!

Pauperisation if you give, and the alternative—Starvation!

The girl with a character to redeem who seeks your situation!

The servants you employ to whom you grudge your sympathy!

The sweating you encourage by buying "so ridiculously cheap."

Women! these are a few of the great political mountains that confront each one of us daily—they are common occurrences to the majority.

Who will care to label herself with the stamp of callousness and indifference that an ignorance of their importance implies.

They must invoke a second thought—platitudes will not dispose of them—open your eyes to your great responsibility—face the conditions that surround the lives of some of our sisters—imagine what it would be to be subject to the like conditions—and if they, why not you?

Ask yourself these questions and then discover that no longer will your duties and responsibilities confine themselves to

one orbit—the home—but the world and the home that is part of it.

The world is made up of countries, the countries of towns, the towns again of homes, and these with their occupants form the State; therefore each individual as an integral part of that State must take an active interest in its welfare, or forfeit all rights of citizenship.

Bishop Butler says: "We have duties so positive to our neighbour, that if we give more of our time and of our attention to ourselves and our matters than is our just due, we are taking what is not ours, and are guilty of fraud."

This seems a fitting quotation. In our self-centred lives our neighbour plays a very secondary part unless he can be useful to us.

Little as most of us realise it, the system of government in each home is the natural one, and therefore, on first principles, the most perfect. The man and the woman here direct and organise (the fault is theirs alone if there is no co-operation), the reins of government are in either's hand, but to insure success and justice in their administration, the mental powers of both must have received equal opportunities of development.

Women as well as men must study that most interesting science of political economy, must sift for themselves the grave social problems which surround us, and which in spite of individual indifference and apathy are unravelling themselves daily because, thank God! men and women are beginning to think.

Women must not be content to spend the income, they must want to know where it comes from, and under present social conditions how more than impossible it is to make one, having due regard to this command: "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you."

They must familiarise themselves with the law of cause and effect, and realise that as long as monopolies exist, so long will starvation and pauperisation ensue. They must believe that the only superiority of one individual over the other lies in having made better use of the same opportunities, and that the greatest coveted honour and mark of distinction should be the universal testimony to a single-minded, upright and faithfully working citizen. What greater responsibility has a mother than to teach her children the ethics of citizenship, and yet how can she teach them something of which she knows nothing?

Yet it is the mothers, the sisters, the daughters, the women of the State who are responsible for the training of the future

statesmen, law-makers and citizens. To bring up citizens you must be one yourself. To teach their sons the value and responsibility of their privilege to vote, women must first realise the value of a vote themselves. When they realise this, they will wonder why they are denied the privilege of the franchise. When they recognise that it is their birthright, they will not rest until they enjoy their natural inheritance, and through their organised influence all men and women will awake to this fact, that perfect legislation can only be provided when both sexes can vote upon the laws that both are called upon to obey.

With these high aims in view, it behoves those of us from whose eyes the scales of conventionality have fallen, who are no longer afraid of truth, but seek to know her, to recognise, first, our own responsibilities and duties to politics in individual action and in organised work, and then to get others to do the same.

This great Congress is the result of women's organised work. The power that produced it was set in motion by a few earnest women, who, recognising the importance and desirability of bringing together women of various thought, creeds and nationalities, that from each other they might learn more of the efforts each was making in different directions for the good of humanity, and by the means of discussion and interchange of ideas should broaden their views on all matters educational, economical, political, industrial and social, formed themselves into an organisation to carry out systematically this noble scheme.

An executive committee, with its president, treasurer and secretaries, was elected. Regular meetings were held, and a constitution drawn up, and in an incredibly short time, speaking from my own experience, the women from the east to the west of Canada found themselves united by a bond than which no other is stronger. Love of humanity! Its works are marvellous, its influence strong and far-reaching.

There is no greater lode-star than this to the earnest thinking woman or man:—"Work of each for the weal of all!" Systematic, organised work on broad, charitable principles, the charity that St Paul speaks of, has given us this international council of women, and through the medium of its national and local councils, the societies that compose them and its many committees all over the world, many wise reforms, educational, legislative, social and philanthropic have been enacted. Without organisation, individual effort, though by all means desirable, is necessarily limited, and therefore too often barren of appreciable results.

In co-operation lies the road to success, and no matter what the ultimate object in view, to obtain it the co-operative effort must be organised.

Meetings are necessary, presidents and secretaries must be elected, resolutions must be moved, seconded and carried, committees formed of experts and good workers. These are the machinery, the ladder on which higher things are to be reached, the practical means to a righteous end, and oh! such a help in getting through business.

I cannot close this paper without making this appeal to my hearers—that in the welfare of the community, and for their greater, better happiness, they will earnestly consider their duties and responsibilities in politics in organised work.

The State has great need of its women's influence through organised action. Let us band ourselves into councils for educating public opinion; suffrage societies for obtaining the franchise; philanthropic associations to relieve our suffering sisters and brothers.

Let the weapons we use against prejudice and indifference be those of justice, toleration and charity. Our object to convince—not to force! Never caring how slow the progress made, so long as each and all are conscientious in their endeavour to promote it, and finding satisfaction in general improvement rather than in individual success.

Now, in conclusion, let us ask ourselves what is the aim and object of politics? Is it not the upraising and general betterment of the community? and if it be so, in what way can it be better attained than by organised effort, striving ever upward and onward, till, as Browning says:—

“ Then the cloud rift broadens, spanning earth that's under,  
Wide our world displays its worth, man's strife and strife's success,  
All the good and beauty! wonder crowning wonder,  
Till our hearts and soul applaud perfection—nothing less.”

**Mrs May Wright Sewell.**—Ladies and Gentlemen,—I am asked by Lady Aberdeen to reply to a question which has been sent up by one of the audience: “To what degree are women in the United States who are not yet enfranchised interested in political questions?” One must first bear in mind the different positions, politically considered, of women in different States of our Union. For example, in 4 States women now have full suffrage, and are eligible to take part in all elections, and to serve in any office to which they may be



called by the votes of their constituencies. These 4 states are Wyoming, Utah, Colorado and Idaho. In 1 other State the enfranchisement of women has gone far enough to have secured for them a municipal vote, and in 21 other States (making 26 in all) women have a still more restricted suffrage, voting for the most part in some or in all elections that affect the management of the public schools. Moreover, in Louisiana there has recently been a very notable movement to interest women in exercising the powers recently conferred upon them to vote in all questions concerning the levying of taxes. This diversity of political condition in 27 of our States and territories, with the continuance of complete disfranchisement of women in more than 20 others, reveals the fact that women in the United States are being educated in citizenship by degrees. Even, however, in the States where women have no vote they are coming to take an increasingly active interest in public affairs. In nothing is this more clearly shown than in the multiplication of Political Equality Clubs, Political Study Classes, Municipal Reform Leagues, and Good Government Societies. The majority of societies under the first two titles are composed of women only. Some of our societies under the last two heads are composed exclusively of men; but for the most part men and women unite in the studies and labours indicated by the titles of the organisations above given. For women only there are numerous classes in parliamentary usage, and, going more deeply into the subject, in parliamentary law. The growing consciousness among women that they need to have some knowledge upon this subject is a result of their increased participation in public meetings and in more private conferences.

Within the last years the part taken by women in municipal elections in New York and Chicago conspicuously illustrate the growing consciousness among American women of their responsibility in public affairs, and of the state which they have in municipal life. Generally speaking the effect of the entrance of women into municipal government has been an increased attention to the sanitation of cities, and to everything pertaining to what may be called public hygiene. The way in which one thing leads to another has been conspicuously illustrated by the progress in public interest made by women who first united in a very common form of association known in the United States as "Village (or Town) Improvement Clubs." Many of these clubs in the beginning considered only the beautifying of the town, getting more and better kept parks, getting more shade

trees planted, wider streets, better kept pavements, the removal of garbage at the public expense, erection of garbage crematories, and so forth. Many women entered such societies, in the first instance, under the solacing conviction that they were setting about purely feminine tasks, only to find that the accomplishment of these most feminine tasks implied influence at the ballot box. Hence many of our "Village Improvement Societies" have now two branches—one dealing with the scientific and artistic questions that are involved in the main issues, and the other with the political side of these questions. Thus it may be seen that the disfranchised condition of American women is giving them an opportunity for education along many lines which, when they shall be enfranchised, will greatly lift the average intelligence of American voters. From one point of view these years of disfranchisement, since the public conscience of American women has been sufficiently awakened to feel disfranchisement an abridgement of their just rights, may be regarded as years of preparation for enfranchised responsible citizenship.

#### DISCUSSION.

Mrs Charles Mallet stated that the whole gist of the question lay on the word "responsibility." The responsibility of women in public life dated from the foundation of the English Constitution. Long ago they used to meet in the parish under some sacred oak tree for the consideration of the village business. In the Saxon times, women met in the Witenagemot, and in the early Parliaments women were summoned. Down to the time of King John and Henry II. they were wardens and sheriffs of the parishes. The wars had taken away the husbands and brothers, and it thus fell to the lot of the women to administer the estates—even those of the realm. Women had also acted in the position of justices of the peace. But all those things came to an end in 1864. She had mentioned those facts to point out that if women had realised their responsibilities she did not think the House of Lords would have ruled women off the land as they had done the night before. She wanted women in general to recognise their national responsibilities and carry them out to the letter. They should look beyond their own homes to the homes of the toilers, and do what they could to help them.

Mrs Sheldon Amos contended that women should take all advantage of every opportunity to get into public life. Many of them, she feared, shrank from the publicity which it entailed.

This was not right, and to go forward should be regarded as a duty.

**Miss Dawson** said she thought women ought to work through an organisation of some sort. In England, government was conducted on the party system, and if they were to have organised work it must be done through the party system.

**Mrs Craven** pointed out that women could do a good work if they initiated their servants into some of the primary laws of government. Her mother had always been in the habit of lending the daily papers to the servants. If that sensible course were followed it would mean a practical training for the future mothers of families.

**Mrs R. Francis Swiney** stated that one section of the North American Indians recently asked the American Government to give them some teachers, but they added the proviso that they must be women. They said they did not want men, because they knew they would try and subvert the rights of the women. It depended upon women to make it clear that they had a right to send to the House of Commons those men who would put pressure upon the House of Lords that they must not give or take away anything without the consent of the whole body of the people—men and women.

**Mrs Mountford** (Palestine) quoted from the Scriptures to show that certain passages were misunderstood, that even the women of the Old Testament enjoyed certain political rights. She thought it was only due to the Oriental women of that day that such a consideration was not in force that day, and it was because the English women were educated that they were trying to do away with the present unfair conditions of women.

In closing the meeting, **Lady Aberdeen** thanked those present for the close attention which had been paid to the proceedings in spite of the crowded state of the room, and expressed the hope that each member of the audience would think over and apply to their own case the words they had heard regarding the responsibilities which rested in some way or another on every woman regarding the public life of their country.

## WOMEN'S STATUS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

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GREAT HALL, ST MARTIN'S TOWN HALL.

*THURSDAY, JUNE 29, MORNING.*

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LADY FRANCES BALFOUR in the Chair.

IN opening the proceedings Lady Frances said she had hoped that when she took the chair at that meeting the status of women in London local government would have been determined in their favour. However, that was not the case, but she did not think it was altogether a discouraging state of affairs. They had had two successful debates, debates in which the work of women had been fully recognised. When the matter went to the House of Lords many women thought the Bill had not such a good chance of passing as it had in the House of Commons. There was, perhaps, more old-fashioned prejudice and youthful ignorance on the subject in question in that Chamber. But even in the House of Lords women had experienced much to refresh and strengthen them in their work. They had had the very helpful speech of the Marquess of Salisbury—a speech which would live in the country and which marked a step onward in the direction of women's equality. Women must also say that they had the honour of producing the fullest House of Lords that had been known since the discussion on the Home Rule Bill, and she believed that they had introduced several of the young peers to the first sight of the House in which they had a right to sit. She (the speaker) did not despair that the day would come when those now young peers would vote in favour of women having a position in those public bodies. Personally, she was not in the least discouraged. They had two most important men in favour

of women—the Marquess of Salisbury and Mr Arthur Balfour. She firmly believed that the time would come when women's claims to sit upon those bodies would be fully recognised. On the previous evening she had been "sounded" by a peer as to whether or not women would consent to be co-opted on committees under the County Council. That showed that fear had set in that women would hold aloof in those things. She had answered that she should always advise women to take part in any work where their usefulness would be recognised.

## Status of Women in Local Government in England.

**Mrs Corbett.** (Read by Mrs Martindale in Mrs Corbett's absence through indisposition.)

IN consenting to read a paper on the Position of Women in Local Government in England, I have not been unconscious that my paper must be very dull, and that I cannot put any matter into it which is not already very well known to all my audience. There has been so much stir in England on this subject since the Parish Council Act of 1894 was passed, so much has been written and so much said, that there is nothing left for me but to repeat. However, in a discussion such as we are now entering upon, it is necessary to clear the ground, so to speak, and to find out exactly where we stand, and for that purpose I intend giving you a list of the various public bodies by which local government in England is carried on (with the duties assigned to each and the share women have or may have in those duties.

We have then :—

1. Parish Council.
2. District Council.
3. Board of Guardians.
4. Borough Councils.
5. County Councils.
6. School Boards.

First, let us review the Parish Council and Parish Meeting—the one the body that elects, the other the body that acts. The meeting is a gathering of parochial electors whereat the members

of the Parish Council are elected by show of hands, unless a poll be demanded. The meeting has also power to adopt certain Acts—for example, that for lighting the parish, for building public wash-houses, slaughter houses, libraries, reading rooms, etc., and to levy a rate of 6d. instead of 3d. in the £.

In some very small parishes, those not exceeding 100 in population, the meeting is not allowed to appoint an executive, but has to do its work itself.

The powers of the Parish Council are extremely limited, and consist for the most part in protecting open spaces and rights-of-way, in regulating the parish charities, in providing allotments and water supply. The last two matters, however, are hampered by the fact that the Parish Council have no means of compulsion, and money, their only means of persuasion, is sadly lacking. They are only able on their own authority to levy a rate of 3d. in the £, and this seldom brings in more than £30, if as much. They have this one power, which might be exercised more often; they are the official voice of the parish, and they have a statutory right to appeal to the County Council if the sanitary authority is not doing its duty. The Parish Councils also have the right, by delegation, to carry out any of the improvements consented to by the District Council, but I am not aware that this power has been exercised. Parishes which are situated in urban districts have no Parish Council or Parish Meeting. The Parish Council is the descendant or successor of the old Vestry, but only possesses its secular powers. As did the Vestry, this council appoints the overseers of the parish, though it has no control over them. The Vestry still exists for all questions ecclesiastical.

*District Councils.*—The second local governing body is the District Council, and this can be either rural or urban. The duties of both very greatly resemble one another; in fact, they differ only in degree. The District Council are the highway and sanitary authority. They keep in order and pay for all roads which are not county or main roads, no parish now having any power over the roads within its boundaries. This duty is performed in practice by the highway surveyor, controlled more or less by the highway committee of the council.

The chief task, however, of the District Council is to look after the health of their district, and it is a duty which requires care, tact and good officers. Under the word "Health" is included everything which conduces directly or indirectly to the health of the district. It is not merely that they have to abolish

dangerous nuisances or close buildings as not fit for habitation, which might cause an immediate outbreak of disease, but they have to prevent the occurrence of anything dangerous to health by providing proper and sufficient drainage for the parishes within their district, by seeing that the houses are well built and sufficiently large, sufficiently numerous and properly supplied with water. Urban Councils have primarily greater powers in this direction than Rural Councils, especially with regard to the building and sanitation of houses, but the Local Government Board may confer the sanitary powers of Urban Councils on Rural Councils, and this permission has been and is being extensively used. This is the body to whom notification of disease should be made, and on whom falls the duty of disinfecting. The duties are performed by means of a sanitary officer and a medical officer of health.

*Boards of Guardians.*—The Board of Guardians consists of all the members of the Rural District Council and some guardians appointed from the Urban District Council, which are within the union. Boards of Guardians were formed in 1834, when parishes were grouped together in unions for the better and more even administration of Poor Law. These bodies have not been much affected by the recent changes in local government, except that the sanitary powers which they held are now exercised by the Rural District Council. The name Guardian of the Poor in itself sufficiently shows the importance of their position. In practice it has become almost a maxim of English law that every person has a right to live without working for his living, and it is the duty of the guardians to see that this maxim is carried into effect at the least possible harm to the community, and the greatest possible good to those for whom the precept was invented, which is certainly not altogether for the idle or the vicious. The guardians administer their relief in two ways, either in the workhouse or by making grants of money or food to those outside the workhouse, and it is always a difficult task to find out whether it is better in each individual case to relieve by the one means or the other. Among the poor there is a strong reluctance to enter into the workhouse, but you very seldom find any strong feeling against receiving outdoor relief, which they call euphemistically "Parish Pay." Boards of Guardians vary considerably in their choice between the two means. Some Boards who are rigid economists refuse all outdoor relief, on the ground that in spite of the apparent extra cost of maintenance in the workhouse the rates are saved, because only

the really necessitous persons will avail themselves assistance in this form. Other Boards of Guardians, equally desirous of saving rates but not equally far-seeing, prefer out relief on the ground that it is better to pay say 2s. per week on outside than 4s. per week on inside relief, forgetting that they will have to pay to many more applicants. I submit that the question should not be regarded as much as it is from the mere point of view of rates. The true view is to relieve poverty without pauperising. There is no doubt that if the view of the strict economist were enforced, and no relief given except in workhouses, and this policy were continued for two generations, there would be a great change for the better in the saving propensities of the poor. But in the meanwhile a great deal of hardship would be inflicted on the poor who have long been used to and expect a much more lenient administration of Poor Law. At present, where different Boards of Guardians have different policies, and where even the same Board need not keep its own policy from one Board day to another, the only hope that the Poor Law will be administered so as to do the most amount of good and least amount of harm to the poor themselves, is for persons to sit upon the Board who have a due sense of the responsibility of their position. The details of guardians' duties are administered inside the workhouse by the master and matron, superintended by the medical officer, and outside by the relieving officers who report applications for relief and distribute the relief when granted. The work inside the house requires a considerable amount of supervision by the guardians themselves, as there are always a large number of children under their charge, who, if not looked after, will merely become hereditary paupers. For how can persons bred in the workhouse fail to regard the workhouse as their only home? This difficulty, and it is a real difficulty, is being met as far as possible under the existing law by boarding out the children with respectable cottagers. The system works well if worked properly, but it requires a great deal of discretion to get foster parents who shall not look on children as a source of income and to get the children before they are hardened by the undomestic surroundings of the union. Guardians have other duties beside those of administering the Poor Law, they have also the duty of providing the means with which to administer it. They have to consider the valuation lists of parishes which have been prepared by the overseers, and have to appoint a special committee out of their own members to decide all questions of disputed assessment. This is a most important



duty, since this list is taken as the basis for the great majority of local rates ; for example, the poor rate, highway rate, parish rate and sanitary rate, and indirectly for the county and police rate. The overseers collect all these monies after the ratification of the lists by assessment committee and pay them into the account of the Board of Guardians. A third and most important duty of the guardians is to act as school attendance committees in all districts not covered by a School Board.

*Borough Councils.*—Borough Councils have almost the same duties as Urban Sanitary Councils, except in the larger boroughs where they have the control of their own police. In these boroughs the council appoints a watch committee who have the sole management of the force. Some large Boroughs are also County Councils, in which case they have the further powers of a County Council.

*The County Council.*—This is the last of purely local bodies, and its duties are very miscellaneous. They may be detailed as the care of main roads and bridges ; control of lunatic asylums, reformatories and industrial schools, technical education, weights and measures, diseases of animals, and certain sanitary duties, such as the prevention of pollution to rivers, etc. They can also make byelaws for the good government of the county, including suppression of nuisances. They appoint half the members of the joint committee, consisting of themselves and county magistrates, which regulates the police of the county.

*School Boards.*—I have called the County Council the last of the purely local bodies, but we may, perhaps, add the School Boards. The School Board sees after the primary education of the district. This always seems to me to be much more an imperial than a local duty, but as the School Board is elected locally, and works locally, and raises its money locally, it must be treated as part of our system of local government.

Now, having briefly mentioned the various local bodies (and their duties), I am in a position to consider the status of women with regard to them, and consider the reason why women should be, and why they are not, on an equal footing with men. In the lower bodies, that is to say, in the Parish Councils, District Councils, Boards of Guardian and School Boards, women are on exactly the same footing as men. They can vote if they have the qualification which will give a man a vote ; can become candidates if they are voters or qualified by residence, and, if elected, can become chairwomen ; nor are they disqualified by marriage. Whereas, in the case of the Borough and County Councils, they

may vote if qualified and if unmarried, but may not be members if elected. The reason for this distinction is difficult to understand. It cannot be that women in the one case are equal to perform the duties, and in the other they are not, for as I have already pointed out in the case of Urban District Councils and Borough Councils the duties are almost identical, yet in the one case a woman may sit, and in the other she may not. It is true in some of the larger Boroughs and most of the County Councils there may be a further duty, that of controlling the police force, which some might urge was not within the province of a woman; but this difficulty might be quite easily got over. Neither Borough nor County Council control their police directly. Both act through a committee, and women might be excluded from this Police Committee, as they are excluded from the County Bench should they be elected to preside over a District Council. At anyrate, there seems no good reason to prevent women performing duties of which they are admittedly capable, simply because their fellow-men might have such confidence in their capacity that they might be tempted to elect them to share in the control of the police.

The reason, therefore, is not really to be found in the difference of the duties, but rather in the history of the growth of the various bodies I have mentioned. The fact is, that the changes in local government during the last 60 or 70 years have very little affected the status of women in England. Where the changes have been made in bodies which can be traced to the old parish, the women have the same rights as they had in the old parish government, where they were, if ratepayers, on the same footing as men; but in the bodies such as the Boroughs and County Council, which may be traced to the old mediæval town, women are at this disadvantage, they cannot sit as members. As a matter of fact women owe very little to modern legislation, except to the extent that modern legislation did not, until the present time, seek to deprive them of the rights they already possessed. A study of the old Common Law of England shows no disbelief in the power of women to take their share in local government. In the old parish women have always been on the same footing as men—that is to say, they could vote at the Vestry meeting and could serve as a parish officer, whether as churchwarden, overseer or sexton. Whether a woman could serve or whether she was ever elected as constable or ale-taster I cannot say. I can find no trace of her serving. It may be that these officers in many cases were not parish officers, but

officers of the manor, or it may be that women were not anxious to serve as constables, and there was too much competition for the office of ale-taster. I do not mean that women's right to these exalted positions was always admitted by men without a protest. We find in the old law books actions in which women successfully maintained their Common Law equality, and judges, although not always in complimentary terms, did affirm their rights. It is not nice, for example, to be told that our right to vote for, or to be elected as, sexton remains, "because the office is of no importance, and does not concern the morality of the parishioners." In the mediæval town it was different. Women had no share in the government; but it was not because they were thought unfit to govern, but because the government of the old town was not in the hands of townsmen as townsmen, but in the hands of townsmen as members of various town guilds, and town guilds were not open to women. How far women were employed in towns in the Middle Age is not the question to be discussed here, but it is certain that as a general rule they were not taken as apprentices nor admitted into guilds. In fact guilds seem to have had the same jealousy of woman's work as the trade unions of the present day. It is fair to say that the guild was also a military organisation, and women members would not have been able to perform all the duties of a member of the guild. When boroughs were reformed, the reformers took things rather as they found them, and as women were not found as members of the town government, they were excluded by the reformers. They were allowed to vote, because in many cases the rights of the freeholders, always a power in English law, had overridden the exclusive privilege of the trader, and women, if freeholders, had acquired the same right to vote as the men.

In conclusion, I hope I have made clear my point. It is this, that as far back as we need go the English law admitted, though perhaps somewhat grudgingly, woman's equality with men in local government. There is one exception—the towns—but this exception was made not because the law doubted woman's capacity to govern, but because the trade societies which had absorbed the government of the towns did not admit women. It is true the law might have dealt more generously, I might say more justly, when the government towns were reformed. The law might have called out of abeyance more than the woman's right to vote, but taking it as a whole, the law has done fairly by women in local government. It has hitherto respected woman's

rights if it has not enlarged them. The present Government is really the first that has tried to curtail the rights of woman. To curtail them not by a direct straightforward attack when they would have to give reasons, but by the shabby trick of turning bodies that are really Vestries into sham corporations, and decent chairmen into mayors *pour rire*.

## The Status of Women in the Local Government of Sweden.

Fröken Maria Cedarschiöld (Stockholm).

It was in the Anglo-Saxon countries that the idea of the emancipation of woman first arose; it was there the work of reform as regards the improvement of her social and legal condition was first organised. Throughout Europe, therefore, the friends of this movement constantly look to England to obtain impulses and examples with regard to their work in this direction.

But the work for the emancipation of women has its national character also, developing in different ways under different national conditions. It is therefore often observable that the reforms which in some countries need much time and labour to bring about, aye, even some struggle, in other lands, in consequence of some peculiarity in the laws, or in consequence, perhaps, of old habits and customs, have arisen almost of themselves. Such has been the case in my country (Sweden) with women's right to municipal suffrage—a right which is not allowed them in the other Scandinavian countries—and is enjoyed only by the women of Sweden, England and Finland among all the European countries. Local autonomy is very old in Sweden—the administration of the village hundred and government was time out of mind in the hands of the people themselves. It is true that in course of time the royal power—by means of prefects, bailies and sub-officers—obtained increased influence. Local autonomy still existed, however, even if for two or three centuries the spark of life was very feeble. It was only in this century that national laws were enacted regulating what had previously been ancient customs that had differed more or less in different parts of the country. The municipal suffrage was then tied to the soil, unaffected by whether the tenure was in the hands of a man or a woman.

The communal laws at present valid were adopted in 1862. As far as possible they had been founded on an ancient basis, this fact causing the municipal suffrage to be allowed to women who otherwise fulfil the prescribed conditions, *i.e.*, are Swedish subjects, of good repute and pay the local taxes. Curiously enough, married women, though standing in Sweden under the tutelage of the husband, may, nevertheless, vote in municipal affairs if in their own name they are taxed for their separate property, and therefore entered in the list of voters.

I will now attempt briefly to state what is the purport of municipal suffrage in Sweden.

There is a difference in Sweden between rural and urban communities, and there are different edicts for the two. The secular affairs of the rural parishes are attended to at the *Communal Assemblies*, which, as a rule, are held three times a year, and on which both male and female voters are entitled to sit and vote. At the Communal Assemblies the officials of the parish are chosen, also they who have the charge and responsibility of the property of the community; the budget of the community is decided on, especially that of the relief of the poor, to mention but a few of the most important duties of the Communal Assemblies.

In the municipal suffrage the political rule, "one man one vote," is not observed; but the number of votes depends on the amount of property held by the taxpayers. In Sweden there are not a few rural parishes where one individual is entitled to more than half of the entire number of votes, and is, therefore, all-powerful in the management of the affairs of the parish. This powerful voter may be a woman, though such a case is rather unusual; but at all events, rich women owning landed property in the country may have considerable influence in the matters of their own parish.

In the towns the municipal affairs are in the hands of a Town Council, which corporation, either of itself or by its different Boards, exercises the determinative right of the entire body of ratepayers, appoints several of the officials of the town, decides its budget, the amount of taxes to be levied on the inhabitants, and the various other matters which occur in the management of a modern urban community, and are of vital importance for the safety, health and welfare of its inhabitants.

In the election of town councillors women may vote on the conditions already stated, and at these elections also the number of votes depends on the amount of income possessed. No voters,

however, may record more than 100 votes, which corresponds to a yearly income of 10,000 Swedish crowns (£555).

It is no unusual thing for women to possess this, the highest number of votes permissible. On scrutinising the voters' list for Stockholm, I have found a considerable number of women, mostly widows, who own houses and possess 100 votes.

Last year more than one-fifth of the municipal voters in Stockholm were women.

Both in urban and rural communities the matters pertaining to church and board schools are managed by the *Parish Assemblies*, in which the men and women belonging to the Swedish Lutheran Church, and otherwise eligible, are entitled to vote.

Among the many matters brought forward at the Parish Assemblies, let me mention: The election of the Parish Council, that of the organist, sexton and vergers of the church, of the School Board and of board school teachers, etc., etc. (the erection and repairs of the churches and school-houses, dwellings for the clergy, sexton and vergers, and in the country also those for the board school teachers), the salaries of these officials, the amount to be paid by the parish to church, clergy and board schools. It is there, too, that the accounts for church and board schools are examined.

Certain parishes have the right of electing their own clergy, and at these elections the same persons have a right to vote as at the Parish Assemblies. A peculiar fact as regards the election of clergy is, that the married woman who may not herself have a right to vote in municipal affairs, yet in the absence of her husband may exercise his right of voting. The election of clergy is, probably, the local election in which women show the greatest interest, and which they attend most diligently.

There are two very important branches in local government for which women seem especially suited, and where their assistance could scarcely be dispensed with—the *School Boards* and the *relief of the poor*.

This has been fully comprehended by the Swedish "Riksdag," which in 1889 assented to the proposal of a member of the First Chamber, Mr F. J. Borg, a warm friend to the emancipation question, and decided that women should be eligible as Guardians of the Poor and as members of School Boards. Hereby the Swedish women obtained a right which, besides themselves, is enjoyed only by the women of England, Finland (since 1893), and of some of the United States.

In Norway women are eligible as members of the School Boards, but not as Guardians of the Poor.

Now let us consider what duties devolve upon these two Boards to which (by the Act of 1889) women are eligible. The Board, which both in towns and most rural parishes has charge of the poor relief, shall look after the poor of the community (that is those who by disease, infirmity and disablement cannot themselves, by their own exertions, earn enough for the support of life), decide which of the applicants shall enjoy parochial relief, superintend that the food distributed in the workhouses is of good quality and sufficient quantity, and that neatness and order reign there; see that the orphans not only get bed and board, but also a Christian education and due instruction, and that those persons who have charge of orphans, or the poor, sick and aged, do their duty by them; also during hard times, and when work is not to be had, propose what steps should be taken for giving occupation to the needy.

All these are things for which a woman is especially suitable, women for so long a time having been active in the many private charitable institutions which in Sweden play an important part side by side with the official Poor Relief.

That admission to the Poor Law Board has been given to women by the Act of 1889 may therefore be considered a great boon for these Boards, and an act of justice to women themselves. Several communities have hastened to elect women for their Boards of Guardians.

No less active and indispensable have women been for a long time with regard to education. Only to mention the board schools: all instruction in the infant schools is imparted by women. Dating from 1859, women have been entitled to hold appointments as teachers in the board schools; each year more women have been thus employed, so that in 1895, of all the teachers duly appointed at the Swedish board schools, 63 per cent. were women and only 37 per cent. men. At the training colleges for board school teachers women are also appointed as instructors.

It was therefore quite a natural stage of development when by the Act of 1889 women received the right of being elected members of the School Boards, which govern all the board schools of the district, superintend the teachers that they fulfil their duties, and the children that they diligently avail themselves of the instruction given. When making appointments of teachers for the schools the Board has to well weigh the merits of the

applicants and place three of the most deserving candidates on the list; after which, the parish assembly makes its choice. Should a teacher neglect his or her duties, a warning is given by the School Board, and should the warning not have due effect, the Board has the right to dismiss that teacher.

The same year that this Act was valid one of the parishes in the metropolis nominated a woman as member of its School Board, and since then all, except one of the parishes in Stockholm and many in the small towns and in the country, have elected women on their School Board, and their zeal and ability in this capacity have gained general recognition.

Before I close my brief summary anent the Swedish woman in local government, let me remind you that women entitled to vote in municipal elections have, in the same way as the male voters, an indirect influence on the elections for the First Chamber of the "Riksdag" since members of this chamber are elected by the Town and the County Council, whose members directly or indirectly are chosen by the Communal Assemblies, in which women are voters.

The Second Chamber of the "Riksdag," on the contrary, is formed each third year by direct election, in which women have no right to vote. In 1884 Mr F. J. Borg, whose name I have previously mentioned, moved in the Parliament that women should, on the same conditions as men, not only have a right to vote, but also be eligible as members of the Second Chamber. This proposal fell through, though in the Second Chamber no less than 44 ayes out of 99 votes were in favour of the motion.

Since that time no bill has been brought forward in the "Riksdag" concerning the parliamentary franchise of women, though each year motions occur for extending the suffrage to wider circles of the male population. Almost every time this question crops up in the Parliament some speaker or other comments on the absurdity of declaring political suffrage to be a right common to all mankind and yet at the same time allowing only one sex to benefit by it; of speaking of general suffrage and yet wishing to exclude therefrom one half of humanity.

If, as I sincerely hope and trust, the Swedish women themselves wish to obtain this important civil right, they will best advance their views by using their municipal rights conscientiously. The remembrance that in this respect Swedish women have a far better lot than the women of most other



nations must be to them a *noblesse oblige* impelling them to take up the great responsibility, and at the same time spurring them to acquire new and richer fields of labour for the benefit of their country.

#### DISCUSSION.

Mrs Sheldon Amos stated that, in spite of Lady Frances Balfour's optimistic observations, she (the speaker) could but feel that women had been badly beaten. There was an old saying :

"A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree,  
The more you beat them the better they be."

And she was inclined to believe that there was a great deal of truth in that statement. But although they had been beaten, they had received beautiful testimonials from Lord Salisbury and others as testimonies which they would use and rub in on every possible occasion, seeing that they came from a body which did not usually speak favourably of progressive women. The true attitude for women to take up at that moment was wonderfully illustrated last year, when the statue of Boadicea—"a woman not unaccustomed to speak in public," as the inscription stated—was placed with fiery steeds—but, strange to say, without any reins—on the Thames embankment, driving straight towards the House of Commons. She hoped that her remarks would not lead to the removal of the statue from its present position. The care of the poor and the sick, the care of the health of the nation, was a portion of the work in which they were expected to take part, and which they intended to fulfil. The only thing they wanted was that they might have the doors open in order that they might get at the work. But women ought not only to do her own work, but should spread the sense of duty amongst other women to act up to their consciences. She wanted to see capable representatives of the working women get upon all public Boards open to them, in order that they might get to the work which was really theirs. They should really try and do something to free working women in order that they might take their share in the government.

Miss Leigh Browne said she should like to refer to the remark in Mrs Corbett's paper, that "modern legislation tended to deprive women of the rights they already possessed." That seemed to her to be the greatest danger they had. In the Board Councils Bill, to which reference had been made, it was intended to deprive women of work which they were actually doing

then, and for which they were made eligible in 1894. Those who knew the lady members of the London Vestries knew that they were doing splendid work, and their experience was of special need at that time to deal with the terrible housing question. All that good work would have to come to an end under that Bill. Another danger which they had to face was in the Board of Education Bill, which had been read a second time a few nights before. It was proposed in that Bill to have a consultative committee about the secondary education of England, and an attempt was being made to get places for women on that body. If the bill went through without women becoming eligible, then it would rest with the grace of the Education Department as to whether or not women should be consulted as to the secondary education of girls. Then they saw that in Ireland a departmental order had recently been made in which the office of rate-collector was refused to women. That subject ought to come before Parliament. The facts she quoted all pointed to the one thing—that there was a tendency in modern legislation to deprive women of their rights.

**Miss Brown**, Liverpool, referring to a remark dropped by Lady Frances Balfour, said women had no reason to thank heaven for the existence of the House of Lords. Time after time, during the last fifty years, measures which would have lifted women's position had been thrown out by a hereditary legislature. As to the argument that women would not vote if they had the opportunity, she must state that in Liverpool the percentage of female voters was quite as high as that of the males, and in some wards it was even higher. Those women who had a right to vote on certain questions had realised their positions, and recorded their votes in numbers quite as large as that of the men. Again, she argued that women were actuated in their voting rather with a desire to improve the conditions of the community than to follow particular parties. Her experience led her to believe that women should be permitted to exercise larger powers, for she believed they were for the good of the general community.

**Miss Bright** said she thought women had lost many of their privileges because they had not used them when they had opportunity. At that moment they were threatened with the loss of another privilege, as that of sitting on the London Vestries; therefore they should interest themselves to keep privileges already gained. One danger that existed amongst women was owing to the scarcity of candidates. She feared

that the next "move" would be to prevent women from sitting on the Boards of Guardians.

**Mrs Evans**, St Martin's Board of Guardians, said there had been a statement that more working women were needed for public life. She addressed them as one who had worked since she was 8 years of age, and had served 13 years on the Board of Guardians for that district. In the recent discussion in the House of Lords in reference to women's position, Lord Halsbury, the Lord Chancellor, discussed the question but did not touch upon the main point at issue. Had he been a member of a London Vestry he would probably have been called to order. She was rather surprised that the Lord Chancellor, who sat on the woolsack, with the vacant chair behind him, forgot the existence of that chair, which was reserved for a woman who had the right to speak first in that chamber. If one woman, however exalted she might be, had a right to speak in that chamber, surely other women had a right to sit upon the new London Councils. Mrs Evans then went on to give details of her work in that parish. She stated that she was an overseer of the parish, and last year had attended 157 meetings out of the 162 to which she had been summoned. She had also been elected a commissioner of work and a trustee of the parish charities. She believed the whole reason why men objected to women being eligible for admittance to public orders was because they were afraid of losing their own seats.

**Mr Hasland** said he should like to address a few remarks on the Irish aspect of the question. He was bound to admit that the present Government had introduced quite a revolution in Ireland as regarded the political position of women. Three years ago the women of Ireland had not a single political enfranchisement, and now they were able to vote in two cases where the women of England were unable to do so. He would remind his hearers that the women of Ireland had the service franchise and the lodger franchise. They now had 85 ladies in Ireland on Boards of Guardians, 30 rural district councillors, and 4 urban district councillors. That, he ventured to say, was a stride in the path of progress for Ireland. He had worked for women's suffrage for over 30 years, and he was forced to the belief that they would never be successful in their agitation until the day of universal suffrage dawned.

**Mrs Hodson Bayfield**, Manchester, spoke of the necessity of having separate political organisations for women. In Lanca-

shire and Yorkshire they had splendid organisations of women, who were doing a splendid work in moulding public opinion.

Mrs Lees, a Parish Councillor of Edinburgh, stated that in Scotland they had every franchise they could get except the service and parliamentary votes, and they were looking forward to the time when they would also have those advantages. The system worked as smoothly as possible, and made her hope that England was in the same position. Women in Scotland had six votes, in five of which they voted on the municipal rule. The other vote was for the School Board, and it was carried out, as in England, on the cumulative system. That system enabled Roman Catholics to get representation on the School Boards.

Mrs Fenwick Miller spoke in the place of Mrs Jacob Bright, who was unable to be present. She said she was quite sure that had Mrs Bright been present she would have spoken strongly in favour of women having political rights. Women had to bear their share of taxation, and why should they not have an equal share in the spending of that money? For many years the Vestry work of London had been practically all carried out by men, and would any of them dare to say that it had been a total success? She thought nobody would attempt the task.

## ADMINISTRATIVE WORK.

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### (A) IN THE POOR LAW AND OTHER FORMS OF STATE RELIEF.

GREAT HALL, ST MARTIN'S TOWN HALL.

*FRIDAY, JUNE 30, FORENOON.*

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Mrs BERNARD BOSANQUET in the Chair.

Mrs Bosanquet, in opening the proceedings, pointed out that the subject under discussion would altogether exclude that of voluntary work. Perhaps it would not be too much to say that in England the administration of the law was as important as the law itself. They would, therefore, not be wasting their time in considering what consisted of good administration as distinguished from bad. Sir Joshua Child, some three hundred years before, had said there never was a good law but was well administered. People of the present day had a good deal more history behind them now, and if they wished to see the effects of good administration as compared with bad, they only had to look at the statutes of their own country. She thought they must admit that the results of laws of other countries were comparatively bad. She thought that a great deal of trouble which was caused in the administration of the Poor Law was owing to the fact that they were relicts from the old statutes, which were devised to regulate everything in a man's life. In the earlier statutes of the Poor Law they found that the regulations affecting the relief of the poor were mixed up with regulations as to the people's games and dress. Coming more directly to the present day, Mrs Bosanquet thought that the fact that they were responsible for the outside poor, without

having practically any power over them, made the work an extremely difficult one. Another great difficulty was in getting the right people to undertake the work. If anyone in the room that evening could give them a hint as to how they could get hold of the right kind of people they would be doing good. The work was very arduous, and was ungrateful in the sense that the guardians seldom got any outside recognition for their toil. Their own feelings of good work done must be the only reward. If guardians sat on the Board for material benefit they were people who were not fit to be doing the work. If they looked at the basis upon which London guardians canvassed for votes, they saw how seldom the right grounds were put forward on which to canvass. They would give their opinions about politics, their views on vaccination, the length of time they had spent in the parish, and the amount which they had to pay in rates and taxes, but she ventured to say that none of those things qualified them for the work of guardians. Unless men would put forward better qualifications for the suffrage of their fellow-citizens, voters might refuse to vote for them, and then there might be a chance of higher qualifications in the future. As to the question of lady guardians, she thought there was danger lying in wait. It was a new movement, and many people were so anxious to see a fair number of women on the Boards that they did not wait to see whether or not they were the right sort of women—as well as being women. Merely being a woman was not, in her opinion, a sufficient qualification for membership on Boards of Guardians.

## Women's Status in the Poor Law.

Miss Louisa Stevenson (Edinburgh).

I PRESUME that I owe the honour of the invitation to read a paper to this great Congress on "Women's Status in the Poor Law" from my having been one of the two first women in Scotland who, in 1882, were elected as members of St Cuthbert's Parochial Board, now merged in the City of Edinburgh Parish Council. I carried on the work for about 10 years, when a re-division of the City boundaries put my residence outside of the parish, and I lost my qualification for election to the board on which I had served for so long. My interest in parochial affairs did not, however, cease with my retirement.

The short time at my disposal makes it impossible to do more than merely touch on some of the various points suggested by the title of the paper, and I shall endeavour to confine myself to principles and practices applicable generally to each country in the United Kingdom.

And first of all I think we may congratulate ourselves on the fact that the legal disabilities of women to serve the State, not only as electors but as members of Parish Councils and Boards of Guardians, have been done away with in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Considering how large a part women have played for centuries as administrators of households, guardians and upbringers of children, attendants on the sick and visitors of the poor and needy in their immediate neighbourhoods, the surprising thing is that such a reform was not contemporary with the passing of the various Poor Law Acts. And one part at least of the failure of these acts to accomplish what was expected of them may be attributed to the want of experienced women as co-workers with men in their administration. I have sometimes thought that a non-ideal law administered with wisdom, intelligent elasticity and sympathy, will probably do less harm than an ideal law administered without these qualifications. Hence the all-importance of those whose duty it is to elect guardians of the poor and parish councillors to make conscience of informing themselves as to the character and fitness of the men and women who are candidates for election, and to use every effort to secure the return of such as have no personal ends to serve and are only concerned with the best interests of the poor. Indifference on the part of the electors discourages good men and women from coming forward. And here I would say that it is a mistake for women electors to concern themselves with the return of women only, as they cannot set aside responsibility for any one of their representatives.

Dr Thomas Chalmers, the great Scottish divine, and one of the wisest philanthropists of this century, said that "the right management of poverty is truly the darkest and most unresolvable of all problems; and that in the face of all which the combined charity and wisdom of man can devise to banish them from the world there appears to exist some mysterious necessity for the accomplishment of the saying that 'we shall have the poor with us always.'"<sup>\*</sup> Dr Chalmers believed that funds raised and administered by voluntary effort and by the churches

<sup>\*</sup> A broad distinction must, however, be drawn between this poverty and the poverty that is allied with pauperism.

would suffice to meet every legitimate claim upon them, without exciting the jealousy and distrust which all guardians know is seldom absent from the minds of the recipients of legalised relief. But the problem *we* have to face is to find out what can be done to lessen the numbers of such, and how to do the best possible for all who will certainly become chargeable to their various parishes.

The first problem is all-important. There are always numbers of people who, by the slightest relaxation of frugal and industrious habits, are liable at any moment to cross the narrow dividing line between self-support and pauperism, with regard to whom no effort should be spared to keep them on the right side. A spirit of independence must be cultivated from childhood, and I believe that many of our best public school teachers are rendering important service in this direction. Young people, too, must be encouraged to lose no opportunity of taking advantage of whatever means of technical and industrial training are within their reach, so that the work they undertake in the future may be so good as to command the highest market price. Want of training, and consequent inefficiency, are responsible for a large amount of poverty, especially among women and girls. It was, in my opinion, a mistake, before the passing of the Free Education Acts, to make the parish authorities the mediums of paying the school fees of those children whose parents professed to be unable to do so, as the very fact of such parents making the acquaintance of the parish officials removed difficulties in the way of their applying for maintenance relief also. I believe in personal friendly influence as a factor in aiding persons on the brink of pauperism and in preventing their falling over. We can never know how many individuals and families have been saved from it by the sympathetic encouragement and help given by Miss Octavia Hill and her fellow-workers in the United Kingdom by the carrying out of their financially sound schemes for the better housing of the poor. Difficult as the task is, all who are willing to help must themselves cultivate a spirit of hopefulness, and not be too ready to assume that nothing can be done. What has been may again be. And it ought not to be impossible to see a revival, in the next generation at least, of that spirit of independence which undoubtedly existed to a greater extent, more especially in Scotland, 50 or 60 years ago. The passing of the Poor Law Acts themselves are to some extent responsible for the slackening of this spirit of independence, as the knowledge of the existence of such a provision for the future,



distasteful though its form may be, both in anticipation and in reality, has certainly had the effect in some instances of encouraging an amount of idleness accompanied by unnecessary expenditure in men and women who otherwise might have been self-supporting for many years. Hence the all-importance of such legislation as shall ensure that participation in the proposed old age pension and cottage home schemes, if enacted, shall be dependent on the applicant having in early life done his or her best, by joining a friendly society or otherwise, to supplement from their own resources such State relief as may be offered in old age.

As to those poor people who have crossed the Rubicon and are actually in receipt of outdoor or indoor relief, I have no hesitation in saying that no class of the community is more in need of the services and sympathy of experienced women as friends and guardians. Their experience and knowledge is wanted, too, to influence the framing of those laws which govern the administration of relief. And here I must confine myself more strictly to my text. I have had the privilege of seeing a number of letters from women guardians in different parts of the country in which, with striking unanimity, attention is called to certain evils requiring remedy. The statements made are in accordance with my own experience. Every guardian of the poor knows how much evil has been wrought through the freedom granted to women with illegitimate children to go out and into the workhouses at their own pleasure. One lady guardian tells of an unmarried woman 32 years of age who one day left her Union with a tramp of 40, of whom she knew nothing, taking with her two girls of 12 and 9 and a boy of 3 years of age. When remonstrated with by a lady guardian as to the risks she ran, she said she could not bear the place any longer, and that if it did not answer she could return. She did return the following day, the tramp having deserted her. The schoolmistress told the lady that the two poor little girls described the events of the night to the other girls in the school in a way quite unfit for repetition. I would ask, has the State any right to subject the children for whom it is responsible to such pernicious influences? Surely some way could be devised to make the repetition of such an offence impossible. I myself knew a married couple who spent their lives in the winter time between the prison and the workhouse. At the beginning of summer they took their leave, with a family of boys and girls, and wandered all over the country, spending their nights in such workhouses *en route* as

they found most to their taste. At the end of the season each parish where they had stayed sent in a bill to Edinburgh for the amount expended on this family, and the guardians had no option but to pay without remonstrance for an experience which had wasted the ratepayers' money, and done harm to everybody concerned. The above cases are by no means single, and could be multiplied *ad infinitum*. They will, I hope, suffice to persuade you of the need of reformation in the laws.

As to the question of boarding out children, we may assume that the day has gone by when anyone would seriously advocate the advantages of bringing up children in workhouses or in the great unnatural, but meantime necessary, Union schools, and we shall probably all agree with Mr T. W. Russell that no child should be left in a workhouse after it is 2 years old. A competent nurse should be at the head of every workhouse nursery. Hope for the future rests with the children. What is to be done with them? Boarding them out in the country has had excellent results, especially in Scotland, where the system was started many years ago. But the numbers of children chargeable throughout the United Kingdom (Scotland 5800) are so enormous that the supply of suitable homes is quite inadequate. By an *ideally* suitable home I mean one in which the child's life is absorbed in that of the family, and where the foster parents bestow upon it a share of the care and affection which they give to their own children. Where the homes are not ideal, it is desirable, and indeed necessary, to obtain the official services of one or two ladies in the centres of the boarding-out districts, who would visit the children and befriend them in after life. Cottage homes, too, for 8 or 10 children, should be established throughout the country under the care of a well-paid matron, or, still better, a married couple without children. All such children would of course go to the public schools, and I am sure women guardians will agree with me as to the excellent results obtained by transferring boys and girls from the dull life of a workhouse school to a lively board school.

Every Board of Guardians should employ at least one woman inspector to occasionally visit the boarded-out children, and who could at the same time see the lunatics certified to be harmless and incurable—a large number of whom, in Scotland at least, are boarded out in certified houses, where they lead more natural lives and are kept at a much cheaper rate than in an asylum. I may say in passing that pauper asylums offer a wide and important field for the services of women guardians, who

may do much good, especially in the women's departments. This was conclusively proved here during the short period when women were members of the London County Council.

To carry out such schemes in the interests of the children, money must be forthcoming. But surely State expenditure to save the present generation of children from future pauperism is quite as justifiable as the enormous expenditure on armaments which, it is said, will save the country from war! This all the more as the Custody of Children Act, 1891, empowers the courts to compel a parent whose children have been chargeable to a Union or Parish Council to repay the whole costs properly incurred in bringing up the child before handing it over to the custody of the parents when it comes to a wage-earning age.

One great improvement in hospital administration of late years has been the appointment of trained nurses in many workhouse hospitals, and too much praise cannot be given to the excellent work done by many of those nurses. Much suffering was caused to the sick from being dependent on the care of inmates whose very presence in the workhouse ought to have been sufficient proof of their unfitness to be entrusted with such responsible work. No sooner had one of these women been taught a few simple duties by the doctor or matron than the chances were that she took her leave, her place being taken by another, absolutely ignorant of the most elementary nursing. The day has gone by when it was generally accepted that *all* women could nurse by instinct.

Even with trained nurses, nursing in workhouse hospitals can never be quite satisfactory till Local Government Boards definitely define the position and duties of the matron-superintendent of these hospitals. *In her own department* she ought to have supreme power to carry out the regulations of a nursing committee of the guardians, of which the lady guardians would naturally be members.

Legislation is also required to deal with the half-witted and sometimes epileptic women and girls who are now free to wander in and out of the workhouses of the country, often with disastrous consequences to themselves. This is a question which has occupied the attention of many women guardians. These poor creatures do not come under the provisions of the Lunacy Laws, and they are utterly unfit to be dealt with in ordinary workhouses. There are objections to many living together in one house, but they might be provided for in certified houses, and given such work to do as they may be capable of performing.

The question of classification in workhouses is a most difficult one, especially as regards the large class of inmates who probably would not be eligible for cottage homes. Much depends on the previous life and surroundings of the individual, and this is a knowledge which the most experienced guardians and the most vigilant of inspectors cannot always obtain. Plausibility counts for much, and everyone knows how little time can be given to individual cases when there are hundreds to consider. Considerable progress has, however, been made in the way of classification in recent years, partly due to the influence of women guardians.

As to respectable aged couples who have any friend or relative to look after them, I think their case may best be met by the giving of outdoor relief. The difficulty comes in when the expense of providing a sick-nurse for either has to be faced. So far as I can learn, the much-talked-of grievance of the separation of aged couples in workhouses (at all events in large towns) has been somewhat exaggerated. In the large city workhouse with which I had to do, after careful and thorough inquiry, I was satisfied that there was not, at the time of my inquiry, one couple in the house who felt aggrieved by the separate arrangement. But all respectable old couples were, as a rule, recipients of outdoor relief.

I have reached the limit of my time, and I have only touched the fringe of my subject.

Last year (1898) there were—

In England,	785,622	registered poor.
„ Wales,	51,291	„
„ Scotland,	98,002	„
„ Ireland,	96,485	„

making a grand total of 1,031,400. Surely this is a field wide enough to give scope for the exercise of the special knowledge and philanthropic public spirit of every woman in the country who is able and willing to help in solving one of the most difficult problems of the age.

It has been impossible for me to enter on the all-important question of the relationship of drink to pauperism; and it is a mere truism to say that were there no drunkenness there would be no pauperism. The whole subject of temperance is in far abler hands than mine, and will be discussed in another section of the Congress.

## Women's Share in the Administration of the Poor Law in Germany.

Fraülein Alice Salomon (Germany).

THE German law has fixed that relief must be granted by the Poor Law Boards to all those who can claim the plea of destitution. These Boards have to raise the necessary funds from common revenues.

To organise the performance of this law rests with the different common councils; they may organise the administrative work of the Poor Law Boards in whatever form they think fittest for the purpose.

The predominant form of administrative work in the Poor Law in Germany is a combination of the professional work of public functionaries, who generally provide for the secretaries' work, with considerable assistance from honorary members, who mostly undertake the work of investigating and relieving. The membership of the Poor Law Board is supposed to be looked at as an honour, not to be borne as a burden, and the words "honorary member" and "honorary office" signify that the bearers of this dignity must be chosen from the best and most qualified persons of the community.

It seems as if in Germany one had altogether forgotten for a long time the number of women who could be counted as fit and qualified members of the communities, and that their special capacities are of an immense value for common welfare, for women were nowhere honoured with the dignity of Poor Law Guardians.

While we have been considering the sphere of charity, our own domain for centuries, and while the history of the Poor Law system from its very first beginnings shows numerous examples of successful female work, the legislators of German States and communities show but a small inclination to let women take active part in the work of public relief.

The guardians of the poor are not voted for in Germany by the taxpaying population, but are appointed by the magistrates. Wherever the necessity of admitting women to the Boards was discussed, a strong opposition was shown, and numerous frivolous objections were brought forward.

The untainted character of generous women, which must not be contaminated by the depravity of life, the unfitness and lack of practical experience of ladies, and the old saying, which is indicted by wealth, indolence or carelessness, not by reflection—the saying that “woman belongs to the home”—those are the reasons which ever again were emphatically pronounced.

It is of some importance for this movement that the greatest resistance comes not from the ranks of the magistrates, but from the executive corporations—from the Poor Law Guardians themselves. Against their prejudices only an indefatigable patience and persistence, a refined skill and a never-failing charity on women's part, could, and can still, win these men—who are completely unacquainted with women's capacity—over to a mutual, sensible and useful form of work.

Though women were not wanting in all these qualities and efforts, till three years ago only two or three larger towns had admitted women to the Poor Law Boards on equal terms with men, with equal rights and duties; especially Cassel deserves to be mentioned, which already led the way in 1881.

Only during the last few years a large number of towns admitted women to the Boards in the same way as in Cassel, where 14 female guardians belong to it, namely, Erfurt with 22, Danzig with 39, Bonn with 80, Köln with 33, among 150 men, Posen, Mannheim and many others. In other towns women have been admitted to supplement the work of the guardians, by either taking a certain section of work, or by doing the same work as men, being invested with the power of giving advice at their meetings, but not to vote.

Meanwhile, the women who were admitted to the Boards showed the futility of the objections, and put a new and lively spirit into the administration. Women in other towns went on with agitation for carrying out their object, and the women's movement took this question up as a part of its programme.

The reasons we put forth are similar to those of the English society for promoting the return of women as Poor Law Guardians; the fact that the larger number of paupers are women, and that it is only a claim of justice that the interest of this largest number of paupers should be represented by persons of their own sex. Then the fact that many women are ratepayers as well as men, and that therefore they should be represented where the rates are spent in favour of the common welfare, and that on women as well as on men must lie the responsibility of fulfilling the rights and duties of citizens.

In consideration of these reasons, and of our earnest efforts to prove the capacity for administration of the Poor Law, the resistance must and will yield in all parts of our country. Women show, in quiet, patient work day by day, that they can invalidate all objections—that they do not need the foolish exterior moral code of former times—that their own interior moral grants them protection, and keeps them pure in all dark and sordid situations in which they are brought by their function.

The different position, which by men was formerly referred to women of different classes—on the one hand, the complete restriction of wealthy women to their home, and, on the other hand, the immense estrangement of working women from their home—must be balanced; these two worlds must be brought in contact, and the administration of the Poor Law is one of the means to help us in this.

Women have learned that it is an immense inconsistency to confine assiduous women to their home, while others, to whom that thoughtless saying, "Woman belongs to the home," is not applied, must work 11 hours a day in a factory.

The home of paupers is a home as well as our own, and German women will work and strive till they gain the power of helping to make all those homes as decent and comfortable as the female capacities in connection with the authority of legislation will enable them.

And administrative work of women in the Poor Law is one of the means of bridging this chasm. The care of the poor is but a small part of common duties; but though it is small, it is indispensable, and, being indispensable, it must be performed in a competent way. Wherever women do this with knowledge and zeal, they will win popularity and confidence, and that will help them to attain to other far larger duties and rights in their communities and in their States.

## Women and Public Charity.

**Mme. Mauriceau (France).**

PUBLIC charity in France is administered by the State, the departments and the parishes at benevolent institutions, almshouses, hospitals, asylums, refuges or retreats, either through charity offices or by private initiative.

Public charity was for a long time part of the duties of the clergy and of high justiciary lords, who enjoyed certain privileges and were expected to support the indigent on their estates.

Charity offices existed in almost all parishes, and were managed by the inhabitants, women as well as men.

Under the earlier system, women managed the hospitals at Laval, Poitiers, Drecy (?), Chateaudien, Lyons and Chambéry; in 1814 a woman was managing the hospital at Soissy.

An edict of 1566 imposed on towns, villages and boroughs the obligation of supporting their poor. The rural clergy were recommended to organise charity offices in their villages by the administration which promised to patronise them and to send them gratuitous medicines.

Benevolence was exercised on a very large scale when it was not left to spontaneous impulse; it was solicited by means of house-to-house visitations, or in the churches, either by the administrators, or by ladies connected with charity, or by the ladies of the parish.

At Lyons requisitions were made at the churches every Sunday; at Nantes a donkey was led through the streets by a man with a bell three times a week in order to remind those who had remnants of food to give away. A lady distributed these contributions. A lady treasurer attended to the furniture and fittings belonging to the poor.

The accounts of receipts and expenditure were published in the presence of the mayor and at least four of the principal inhabitants; the parish priest was invited to attend this meeting merely in his character of principal inhabitant.

The sixteenth century witnessed the formation of ladies' charitable societies, and of unions of lady rectors or governors of hospitals at Marseilles and at other cities. A great number of ladies were connected with the charities of the parish, or grouped together in benevolent associations; they were elected by the inhabitants, and endowed with power to add to their number.

Sturdy beggars were set to sweep the streets and clean the sewers, or they were forcibly enrolled for employment at public works.

"Able-bodied beggars," runs an Ordonnance of 1566, "shall be compelled to till the ground or do other work to earn their living" on penalty of being flogged at the nearest town.

In 1657 Louis XIV. issued an edict forbidding the poor and the homeless to ask for alms; he gave them as refuges La



Salpêtrière, Bicêtre, and Notre Dame de la Pitié. But these institutions could not admit more than 10,000; the rest continued their vagabond life. When the king saw this, he had the strongest men taken into service on the galleys, where more men were needed.

All property confiscated in consequence of duels was handed over to charitable institutions by order of the edict of 1711.

In 1724 Louis XV. formed a sort of station in every important town, where all beggars, healthy or invalid, were locked up.

At certain periods the State was obliged to send the police begging for the poor; this professional begging had its official difficulties, its schools and its masters, almost its wardenships. For instance, the receiving of alms at the doors of churches constituted a privilege, the happy possessors of which were called "trouiers," "gapers" among the poor.

Three deniers (about one-seventeenth of a penny) were added to the tax, and the resulting income was used for building refuges and houses of correction for beggars. In 1767 up to 50,000 beggars were arrested, and the 33 lock-ups of the kingdom were no longer sufficient; hospitals, charity workshops and prisons were thrown open 10 years later in consequence of continued bad harvests—the beggars numbered 1,200,000.

Turgot, the minister, caused charity works to be undertaken, Linguet, the member, offered 90 louis d'ors out of his own pocket as a prize for the best work on the suppression of mendicancy.

The official parliamentary reports of the States General of 1789 give an idea of the reforms that were to be introduced in the organisation of charity throughout the kingdom. All over the land the people clamoured for the foundation of maternity hospitals, the supervision of foundlings, and the annulling of the edict of Henry II. which imposed the penalty of death on a girl who had concealed her pregnancy.

Women addressed numerous petitions to the king asking that the dispensing of public charity be placed entirely in their hands. Madame Palm Alder, a Dutchwoman, brought out a remarkable dissertation on the organisation of public charity. This work is still to be found in the National Library.

On the 9th Florial, in the year 2 (i.e., the 24th April 1794), the National Convention, under the presidency of Robert Lindet, heard the reading of a petition addressed to it by Térésa Cabarrut, Marchioness of Fontenay (afterwards Mme. Rallien), demand-

ing that all women should be called to the abodes of suffering and misfortune in order to bestow their care and sweet consolation in those places.

Laws which were to bring about a reorganisation of public charity were enacted in 1792 and 1796, and they were enforced more or less.

Since the 19th "Brumière," in the year 8, the administrators of charity have always been nominated by the government or its delegates; from 1813 to 1830 the offices were allowed to nominate their own candidates; from 1830 to 1860 such nominations applied to half the vacancies only, for the other half the initiative belonged to the general council of almshouses.

From 1860 to 1879 two lists were made out, one on behalf of the benevolence office, the other for the direction of public charity. From that time up to 1895 the mayor made out the list of names from which the authorities were chosen.

By the decree of November 15th, 1895, a special commission, composed of the mayor and councillors of the parish and of certain electors, was charged with the duty of drawing up a list of persons fit to perform the functions of administrators in the charity offices of the city of Paris. This decree admits women on the same footing as men.

We give the text of the decree:—

Article 4. "Women may be nominated as administrators of charity offices; the duties shall be honorary."

Article 8. "For purposes of enquiry, visiting and collecting, each office shall have attached to it commissioners and 'patronesses' whose functions shall be honorary."

"The commissioners and patronesses shall be nominated by the Prefect."

The number of lady officials as well as of patronesses shall not be limited.

Unhappily the time intervening between this decree and the next nominations was too short; only a few women's names appear on the candidates' lists made out by the municipality, so that at the present moment we find only nine women administrators of charity offices in Paris.

The charity offices distribute monthly tickets entitling holders to 30fr., 20fr., 10fr. or 4fr. respectively; allowances towards rent may amount to 10fr., 15fr., or 20fr.; in cases of pregnancy to 15fr. or 20fr.; for young mothers to 10fr., 15fr., or 20fr.; in cases of sickness to 10fr. or 15fr. per week.

The monthly tickets of 30fr., or tickets entitling to an

amount equal to the value of maintenance in an almshouse are given to persons who ought to have found shelter there, but had to be turned away through want of room.

Before anyone can be enrolled as a candidate entitled to assistance by organised public charity, he must prove that he is of French nationality, domiciled in Paris for at least 3 years, and incapable through age or sickness of providing for his livelihood.

Women who are widowed, separated or divorced from their husbands, or deserted by them, and who possess the qualification of domicile and nationality only, can obtain relief on the plea of having a family to provide for; such a woman can be enrolled on the charity list even if she be young and strong, provided she has several children; the regulation requires the burden of a family only.

In Paris there are at present 4265 men over 70 who are sheltered in almshouses free of charge; 3682 enjoy a pension equal to 30fr. (per month); 32,152 indigent invalids and widows with children receive 4fr. per month or 13c. per day. How much relief 13c. can bring to the misery of each day!

More than 16,000 old people declare that they have nothing to eat, nothing wherewith to clothe, lodge and warm themselves. This imposes a grave responsibility on those who are in charge of the means of relief. An ardent emulation ought to exist between public charity administration and the benevolence offices for providing indoor relief. The work of inquiry and visiting ought to be extended and put on a permanent basis; for in order to know the poor and help them efficiently we must be near them. "There is one function especially," writes M. Legouvé, "from which women are, singularly enough, excluded, and which by right belongs to them—I refer to all the great charities devoted to the poor and the sick. How is it women do not take their share in the administration of the benevolence offices, nor in the organisation of mutual help societies, nor in the visiting of the sick, nor yet in the legal guardianship of foundlings. Public charity is one of those public functions in which women could be of the greatest service, they know better than men how to dispense charity. The slightest misfortune moves them; they can find sweet words of consolation; they put their questions with tact; they deal gently with the vanity of the wretched; they divine the misery which is concealed; all this demands sagacity and a kind heart, attributes that essentially belong to women; the effect of their helpful and devoted ministrations would be manifest on all sides.

Women would be an excellent addition to the administration of the inspection branch of inquiry and visiting as well as in the higher councils of public charity, in the councils for the supervision of hospitals and almshouses, and in all departments of public charity.

In many countries women are called upon to lend their aid to official benevolence.

I will not speak of England. You are well aware that here women are admitted to the position of Poor Law Guardians, *i.e.*, watchers over the poor. In 1875 Miss Merington was for the first time nominated for this office for Kensington; her nomination was unopposed. Since then the proportion of women has constantly increased; there are at present over 100 employed in this branch of work, and they make themselves very useful by their personal services to the poor, whom they visit, and for whom they obtain work.

At Elberfeld, Germany, an association of women of all classes has been formed for the purpose of perfecting and even supplementing public charity in cases of urgent need where the official formalities prevent immediate help and in similar instances. This association sets itself the task of wrestling with pauperism, of fighting against mendicancy, and of working towards restoring their personal independence to the needy; private benevolent societies furnish information concerning the poor who are to be assisted, and thus useless overlapping is avoided.

In Sweden a Royal Decree of March 22, 1889, makes women eligible as members of the administrative council for communal charity and for benevolent Boards.

In Norway the question whether a woman may be nominated as a member of a benevolent Board has been settled in the affirmative.

In Denmark the Landsting has taken up a project for authorising women to share in the management of the Poor Relief Fund; besides which they supervise the protection of infancy.

In Bohemia women are admitted to the sittings of the Charity Commissions and Boards.

In Italy a commission in 1880 was entrusted with the reorganisation of public charity, and unanimously demanded that women should be allowed to take part in its administration, but the Chamber pronounced itself against the project. In 1888 the State Council of Italy opposed the eligibility of women as members of charity Boards. During the Parliament of 1890 the

question was resumed and the law passed, authorising women to become members of all bodies governing charity.

In the United States the influence of woman is strongly felt; charity is there left to private initiative, and in all institutions similar to our Public Relief organisation women take their places in the governing bodies and relief commissions.

The same conditions prevail in Canada, in Victoria, Australia, and in all English colonies.

In the State of Michigan an Act of 1873 authorises Government to nominate one or several women as members of the Commission of Correction and Charity.

At Rhode Island Government nominates a council of seven competent women to be inspectors of all charitable institutions in aid of women.

The advent of women into matters of public charity is exercising the minds of legislators everywhere. It is evident that women have peculiar talents for all charitable missions; their power of organising in detail would be of service to public charity, it would ensure a better distribution of assistance, earnest inquiry and regular visits. Therefore it would be a misconception of the great womanly qualities of love and devotion if we continued to regard women as incapable of directing organisations for the assistance of the needy, the relief of the sick and the practice of charity.

## The Working of the Boarding-out of State Children System in New South Wales.

*Mrs Dixon (New South Wales).*

WHEN Lady Renwick told me that your Council had made a request for a paper on "The Guardianship of Children," and that I was to provide it, I felt rather at a loss, the title is such a comprehensive one. However, we supposed that it was meant to apply to the management in New South Wales—of our waifs and strays. So I went to hear Mr Hanson, our director of State Children's Department, and I have to thank him for the information I have tried to embody in this paper. I fear that you will be shocked, as I was, to find such a large number of neglected children in our small and fairly prosperous population of about

1,300,000, especially when we remember that this does not include the large number of sometimes sorely neglected children of dissolute people, who keep some sort of a house together, and will not give up their children. But when you remember that a large proportion of our population is composed of miners, seamen, shearers and others, who are virtually nomads; that Sydney and Newcastle, our largest cities, are seaports; that when the "mining fever" takes hold of a man, he seldom returns to steady married life; that the army of shearers who go from station to station as the season advances is mostly composed of men who never "settle down," you will not, I hope, think that we are worse in New South Wales than in other places.

In 1879 some ladies formed themselves into a society to arrange for boarding out destitute children who, up to this time, were provided for at different religious orphanages, and (principally) at a large institution at Randwick, one of the suburbs of Sydney. This asylum, as it was called, was well managed, and the children were well taught and trained, as far as the barrack system allows; but thinking women felt that our future men and women needed something of home discipline to make them citizens such as we need in our new and quickly growing country. For the boys, perhaps, it was not so bad. They were taught trades, gardening, etc., but even for them the home life was absent—the softening influence of female society was necessarily absent. But for girls it was far worse. We do not want, in our new country, girls able to manage steam laundries, we want a girl who can make a fire outside between two big stones, and boil her clothes in an iron pot or bucket over it, and make the most of the water, too! We do not want girls who need a large range to cook a dinner, we want them to manage to set a wholesome meal before their husbands, with only a camp-oven, a fryingpan, saucepan and kettle for equipment.

Pray understand that *we* have not usually to put up with these hardships, but our free selectors and farmers, who are turning our desolate bush into smiling homesteads, esteem themselves fortunate if they have as much when they start house-keeping. So these women of ours bestirred themselves and persuaded the Government to grant them £200 to start with. Next year (1880) they got another grant of £400, and at the close of 1880, 57 children had been placed in families, chiefly in the country.

In 1881 Parliament took the subject in hand, and passed a Statute to appoint a Board, and formed "The State Children's

Relief Department," so placing it under regular official control. Since then this department has grown rapidly, and has carefully and consistently worked for the good of the children. The Acts (for there have been several passed as some new point has arisen) provide for the withdrawal of children from any institution which receives Government aid from the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the placing and paying for children in homes, or as adopted, or as apprentices. Parents, when they are able (as in the case of a man whose wife has died, and who cannot keep his house together, for instance), must contribute to the support of their children.

Before a child can be "boarded out," the boarding-out officer must inquire into the circumstances of the child, whether he has parents, where they are, etc., etc. Then he must inspect and report on the home and character of the proposed foster-parents, who must first be recommended by a clergyman, magistrate or other approved person in the district. It is also stipulated that the Protestant children must be placed with Protestants, and the Roman Catholics with people of their own faith. After being placed, the children are visited by the boarding-out officer as often as practicable, and the lady visitors of the district are always looking after their charges. These visitors have to send in periodical reports as to the treatment of the children, the condition of their clothing, bedding, health, and attendance at church, day and Sunday schools.

The difficulty of dealing with the large proportion of diseased children soon asserted itself. One can readily understand that these children, most of whom are rescued from vicious surroundings, living in sin, poverty and neglect, are tainted from their very birth with disease and immorality. At first the Board doubted the wisdom of undertaking these cases, especially of young infants, but the wonderful improvement in those who were removed to the healthy country homes decided the question. The Board decided that they would bear the onus of an increased mortality as well as expense rather than deprive these sickly babies of these advantages. As an instance of the kindly manner in which the Board administers, I may tell that deserving poor mothers are allowed to take their children to the homes provided, and to visit them occasionally, so as to satisfy themselves as to their children's welfare; and in 1897, after much thought, an Act was introduced to the Legislature, and passed, giving the Board power to "board out" children to their own mothers (being thoroughly deserving deserted wives

or widows). This Act also extended the age to which a child may be "boarded out," and gave powers for controlling the property, wages, etc., of the children, and (a very necessary item) for protecting the foster-parents, or guardians as they are called, and adopted children from the real parents, who are apt, when a child is old enough to earn wages, to reappear, full of love for their darlings! Another power this Act gives is that of increasing the pay for delicate children to a maximum of 10s. a week. *Mothers* caring for their own children get from 1s. to 5s. a week each for them.

The *class* of persons applying for children has generally been very gratifying, and they are so numerous that the Board is able to pick and choose, as well as to send out more children than they anticipated. In fact, foster-parents are often waiting for children to be "cleared" from the asylums, where they are kept until the poor little things are cleansed from the physical impurities with which, as a rule, they are afflicted when brought in. Of course there have been instances of improper homes having been chosen, as unfortunately the statistics show that 1509, being 36 per cent. of the applications, *all* supported by clergymen and magistrates, had been *rejected* owing to the bad character of the applicants! However, the supervision afterwards very soon remedies that. Another difficulty that the Board has to cope with is the children who seem to be quite unmanageable and have to be sent back to the reformatory schools, but these cases are comparatively rare, and often prove more incompatibility between the guardians and children than real viciousness, and they are generally comfortably arranged by placing the child in another home. One can easily understand that a poor child taken from the streets or a vile house, with *such* parents, needs a wonderful amount of loving, patient forbearance, and it is hardly to be expected but that there should be failures in the new relationships.

To return, in 1885 the Board tried the experiment of having a cottage home at Mittagong, one of our health resorts, under the care of a matron, called Mother, for the sick and delicate babies. This proving successful, there are now 9 such cottages, all in the same district, where children are nursed into health, so as to be ready for boarding-out in the ordinary way.

When a child reaches the age of 14 he is apprenticed out, the boys generally with farmers, orchardists and storekeepers in the country, while elder girls are generally placed with farmers, or in comfortable middle-class homes. Every effort is made to



keep brothers and sisters together, and now that mothers are eligible, this object of the Board is more easily attained. A feature in this connection is that strangers can scarcely obtain children for adoption or apprenticeship, because so many foster-parents, rather than relinquish the child they have grown to love, prefer to adopt it themselves and give up the money grant, and when children are old enough to be apprenticed, and State payment stopped, a large proportion of the guardians prefer to pay the apprentice wages rather than to lose their charges, and generally it is evidently from real affection, the apprentice being quite of the family circle. In the 10 years ending in 1898, £18,607 in wages has been earned by the "State" children. This money, or a large proportion of it, is banked in the child's name, and is handed to him when he is out of his time.

I will not trouble you with many statistics, but perhaps you will like to know how the relative numbers stand of the years ending April 5, 1881, and April 5, 1889—

	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
April 5, 1881, . . . . .	24	35	59
April 5, 1898, . . . . .	2083	1626	3709
Of these . . . . .	69	80	149 are
adopted, without any pay-			
ment, and . . . . .	572	367	939 are
apprenticed, and have wages accumulating for them.			

April 5, 1898, 770 mothers were receiving State pay (in sums varying from 1s. to 5s. per week for each child) for 2422 children. Of these

567 are widows,  
132 deserted wives,  
26 husbands insane,  
25 husbands in gaol,  
15 husbands in asylums,  
5 husbands in hospital.

To sum up the object of the labour of our State Children Board, they work, knowing that the poor must be aided, and knowing also that asylum life is not good for the children to grow up in, either for their own sakes or that of the community. Necessarily it must be one of rigid routine. However kind the oversight may be, the children must be drilled into uniform behaviour, dressed in uniform clothing, and individuality lost. This is a serious loss to a community. Genius, self-reliance, independence of spirit, are all kept down to one dead level

The ideal of the Board is, family life, sympathy, love, companionship. The homes and foster-parents are jealously chosen and jealously watched over by local committees, as well as by the official department. The aim is to make the child a child of the house. He is not a servant or apprentice. The State pays for his board and residence, and then demands that he shall have the lot of ordinary children—sharing the praise or blame, the tears and smiles, the joys and sorrows, the love and kisses of the home.

## Forms of State Relief in New Zealand.

Mrs Grace Neill (New Zealand).

FAR away in the South Pacific lies New Zealand, the little group so happily named "The Fortunate Isles." A five days' journey separates Wellington from Sydney, and every characteristic of nature marks her distinct from Australia. Neither does any taint of an Ishmaelite ancestry linger amongst her people. New Zealand was colonised in freedom, her settlers were of sound and wholesome stock, and with high ideals her founders sought to build a brighter Britain. But what has this to do with New Zealand Poor Law? To my mind there is a strong link of social progression connecting young New Zealand with the Mother Country. The great report of the English Poor Law Commissioners, with its ghastly revelation of current evils, dates from 1834. Social reform was in the air; thoughtful men were appalled at the cavern yawning beneath their feet, and Mr Gibbon Wakefield and other idealists of high aims and practical knowledge desired to found this brighter Britain free from the accumulated wrongs and traditions of past centuries. The very names of "Poor Law," "Pauper," "Workhouse" must not be allowed to take root in this young country. And they have not. But although in New Zealand we have not England's blackest poverty nor her splendid luxury, her munificent charity, still there are poor to be relieved. Following English traditions, our administrators taxed the people, but called their poor relief "charitable aid."

The Act under which we are now working was passed in 1885 "to provide for the management of public hospitals and charitable institutions, and for the distribution of charitable aid." The lapse of years, together with a rapid increase of population,

has shown minor defects in the Act, and possibly ere long it may be amended in certain directions. Dr Duncan Macgregor is the inspector-general under this Act, and undertakes the work in addition to his office of Inspector-General of Lunatic Asylums. The chief defect in our present system lies in the multiplicity of small local bodies and the lavish expenditure thus induced. The area of New Zealand is rather less than the combined area of Great Britain and Ireland, and its white population about 750,000, or somewhere near that of the city of Liverpool. The whole country is divided into 23 charitable aid districts, each having a distinct Board, and the special duty of a Charitable Aid Board is to levy a poor rate. Each Board is required annually to ascertain the amount of expenditure required for the maintenance of institutions and for outdoor relief in its district during the coming year, and to allocate the proportion of such expenditure to be contributed by the municipalities and local authorities within its district. Some Hospital and Charitable Aid Boards undertake the management and distribution of the funds raised, others hand over the required amount to lesser bodies for distribution.

Every three years the Government apportions the representation of the various small local bodies on the district Hospital and Charitable Aid Board, in proportion to the population and the amount contributed by each.

New Zealand hospitals for the insane, or lunatic asylums, are entirely in the hands of the State. We have no "pauper" lunatics. The uniform charge for maintenance of each patient in an asylum is £1 per week; but if this is ascertained to be beyond the means of a patient's relatives, a smaller sum is made the charge. This may be as low as 2s. 6d. per week in some cases. A certain proportion are, of course, destitute; that is to say, unable to pay anything for their maintenance. They become a charge upon the State. No money for the support of destitute lunatics comes out of local rates.

There are 44 hospitals for the relief of the sick scattered throughout New Zealand. These are supported by local rates, aided by voluntary contributions, bequests and payments for patients' maintenance. The rates collected for this purpose are subsidised by the Government to the extent of £ for £. All voluntary contributions receive from the Government 24s. for every £ collected, and bequests 10s. in the £ up to a certain limit.

Every patient admitted to an hospital is liable to contribute a reasonable sum towards his maintenance, according to his means.

If unable to pay, he comes under "The Destitute Persons' Act," and maintenance money may be recovered from near relatives if they are in a position to pay. Last year the total receipts for hospitals amounted to £108,210, and the expenditure was £95,699. As a rule, New Zealand hospitals compare very favourably with those in the Mother Country in the way of nursing, modern methods, appliances, sanitation and comfort. The larger hospitals are careful training schools, and nurses are only certificated after three years' training. Only one hospital—the Dunedin Hospital—has a medical school attached.

As I have already said, we have no "workhouse," but we have institutions for the reception and care of the aged, infirm and needy. They are called variously homes, refuges, or benevolent institutions, and there is one or more in each Charitable Aid district. Usually inmates are confined to those quite beyond work, either from infirmity or age, and the proportion of women to men inmates is small. Many old men are of the pioneer or gold digger class who never had wife or family. The only work these old persons do is a little gardening or poultry tending round about the institution, and such household duties as may be allotted to them. Of course these homes vary as to management and comfort; but, speaking generally, the diet scale is both elastic and liberal, the food well served, and the home clean and comfortable. We have plenty of sunny days in New Zealand, and it is delightful to see the old folk basking in the sun, appreciating its kindly warmth in the winter of their days.

Now I arrive at the weakest spot of local administration—outdoor relief. The combined population of Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch amounts to about 151,000, and the number of persons receiving outdoor relief last year was 6574. The loafer, the idle, the destitute naturally drift towards the larger towns, and if outdoor relief in these towns is lavish and easily obtained, country districts feel that they are heavily rated in order to pay for such careless expenditure.

Dr Macgregor, the inspector-general, in his report of 1896, speaks out on this point. He says: "There is no public office where inexperience is so mischievous and its effects so terribly expensive as in dispensing public charity. . . . I have pointed out that there can be no progress so long as outdoor relief is subsidised by the State. To prevent its destructive expansion at the cost of the moral degradation of our people, it must be thrown on the local rates. The State subsidy for outdoor relief should be put an end to."

It must be remembered that in New Zealand all inmates of charitable institutions and all adult recipients of outdoor relief have votes.

In the matter of destitute children we have several methods at work. Some are boarded out in private families, some are placed in small cottage homes containing 20 to 25 children, mostly girls. Others are placed in industrial schools under the Education Department, the District Charitable Aid Board paying for their maintenance. My own opinion is, that all our destitute and orphaned children should be made direct wards of the State, and placed under the legal guardianship of a servant of the State appointed for that purpose. A discussion on forms of State relief in New Zealand would hardly be complete without mention of old age pensions. But the old age pension of New Zealand must in no way be considered as belonging to Poor Law or Charitable Aid. As the preamble to the Act passed during the session of 1898 sets forth, "It is equitable that deserving persons who, during the prime of life, have helped to bear the public burdens of the Colony by the payment of taxes, and to open up its resources by their labour and skill, should receive from the Colony a pension in their old age." And from personal observation I can say that the State pensioners look upon their pension as an honour and a credit to them. I was present in the Magistrates' Court in Wellington whilst he was making investigations and granting certificates, and the class of persons who applied were really and veritably the respectable aged poor. From the Benevolent Institution in Dunedin, of about 200 inmates 27 received State pensions and left the institution. In outdoor relief in the same city 104 cases—60 men and 44 women—had allowances stopped as they now received pensions. This represented a saving of about £1000 a year to the local rates, and the payment of these pensions would amount to about £400.

## Irish Women in Local Government.

**Mrs Maurice Dockrell (Ireland).**

By the provisions of the Local Government Act of 1898, following closely upon the passage of the Women's Poor Law Guardians Act of 1896, a large field of useful public work has been opened up for Irishwomen. This work ranges itself under the head of

the three classes—Electors, Poor Law Guardians and District Councillors.

That Irishwomen have not been slow to avail themselves of the privileges rather grudgingly granted by the new Act is shown by the fact that not fewer than 100,000 women are qualified to become Local Government electors, and 85 have been elected to the Rural Councils and Poor Law Boards, and four—of which I am one—are sitting as urban district councillors. To properly appreciate the difficulties these women have to contend with, you must try to recollect the position of affairs in the sister country.

Ireland is in a transition state. The governing power in local affairs has passed from the Unionists to the Nationalists, from Protestants to Catholics, from the educated, cultured, leisured classes to the traders, small farmers, and, in many cases, even to the labourers; but the women who have been elected nearly all belong to the highly-educated class, and some of them are Unionists and Protestants. From this hasty sketch it will be seen that the women who enter public life require a great deal of tact, patience, and what I must call a level-headed devotion to the public good; but I believe that this feminine element, particularly when allied with a certain masculinity of intellect and administrative ability, is destined to become a very potent factor in public life. The Irish are a gallant, chivalrous race, to whom anything feminine powerfully appeals. My own individual experience fully bears out this optimistic view. I am a Unionist and a Protestant, about two-thirds of the members of my council are Nationalists and Catholics, yet I was unanimously elected to be deputy vice-chairman, and I have been placed upon several committees, including being made chairman of the Dwellings for the Very Poor. I have always received the utmost courtesy and consideration, and when any purely feminine question comes up, my opinion generally carries some weight. But then I have to confess that I am quite old-fashioned in some respects. I still believe in husbands and babies and frocks. I seem to be a connecting link between the old type of woman who thought men must be always right and the new type who think they are always wrong.

In conclusion, may I be permitted to say a few hopeful words as to the future of my own dear country. I do not believe Ireland is going to destruction because the Nationalists are in the majority. I hold that the possession of power will steady them. They will gain the courage of responsibility, and will weed out or restrain the more uncontrollable members of their

party. And I think it is upon us women especially devolves the task of reconciling the opposing forces, softening asperities, and cementing all classes, so that peace and harmony shall reign in our land, and that truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations.

## The Teaching of the Rudiments of Law in Primary Schools.

Mme. de Chwatowa (Poland).

WISHING to comply with the desire expressed in the programme of the Congress, I shall speak in English, but first beg my hearers' indulgence for my deficient pronunciation. I am Polish.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the study of law for youth in the schools—these two things are the dream of my life.

Then I will give only the principal points. The Institution for Children—those poor creatures torn from the arms of inhuman parents or guardians—is, as I have heard, in such an excellent state in London that I begged for a letter of introduction from our vice-president and philanthropist, Mr Moldenhaver, to the secretary of Howard Association, William Tallech, who will be so kind as to explain to me the working of the Society for Children.

I should be very happy if I introduced the teaching of law to youth also in England.

Whilst in boarding or government schools our daughters learn various laws, *ab ovo*, divine laws, the laws of nature, of aesthetics, and fine arts, of logic and pedagogy, and finally, after having completed their duties, the laws of fashion in every sense of the word. The study of social human laws has, up to this, been totally excluded from the rich programme of our schools.

It is true that the aforesaid laws do not form a part of boys' studies in schools, which is to be regretted. However, as a woman's guardian, and exercising some profession, a man is more in contact with the court, lawyers, notaries, etc.

This is why a man, though not a lawyer, is somewhat versed in law, and can defend his cause in case of necessity.

Even under the most favourable circumstances, a woman is usually once in her life in a lawyer's office. This is to sign her marriage contract, and then she scarcely even understands the point in question. Her father or her guardian speaks for her. Besides, on the point of confiding to her future husband her honour, her life, at such a solemn moment a woman has generally no thought for money matters. Henceforward the husband must defend his wife's rights.

But as to women who have not a husband or a guardian : what must unmarried girls and widows do ? They must also have a share in life and existence.

Therefore they must have at least an elementary knowledge of their rights in each circumstance which may present itself. I say elementary, because I do not consider that each woman should make law a pre-eminent study, thus neglecting the duties for which nature has destined her ; on the contrary, I disapprove of a woman who, not possessing the intellectual power granted to certain exceptional women, tries to force her way into the sanctuary of science ; and only in order to acquire titles, flatter her vanity, rise to the level of man, does she endeavour to wrest from him the palm of superiority.

For all that, the study of law in its popular form will be no obstacle to a woman's accomplishing the duties of her state ; far from that, it will prove extremely useful.

A celebrated physician has said that any rational man may be his own doctor by observing proper hygiene, which does not prevent his consulting a good medical adviser in grave cases ; the same may be said respecting the study of law for young people.

Our women, not even being acquainted with the elementary principles of law, often become the victims of their ignorance. One of my friends lost all her fortune, the accumulation of which cost so much pains, by her inexperience ; but ignorance does not defend a woman.

I am of opinion that the elementary principles of civil, criminal and judicial law should be taught in every school. On getting married, a woman should know her rights relating to her husband. In case of an unforeseen contingency arising in the country, she should know her rights relating to her steward, tenants, etc., in order to be able to get herself out of trouble, in case of her husband's absence or death.



In this way she will not fall into the snares of dishonest persons, so numerous in the country, who, though not acknowledged lawyers, treat ignorant people most shamefully.

With regard to the difficulties which the study presents, there is nothing to be feared; at present our daughters learn far more difficult things. The time is long since past when the possibility of acquiring certain sciences was refused to women owing to their indolence. Among women we already have doctors, lawyers, and even professors, therefore nothing is simpler than to learn the elementary principles of civil, commercial and judicial law.

Very often our daughters devote time, while they have no capacity; still they are indefatigable, because such and such an accomplishment is fashionable. For instance, painting is at present so widely spread that it has become a real epidemic; young girls, conversing about their studies, do not mutually ask, "Do you paint?" but "What do you paint?" Everywhere homage is rendered to the fine arts, to the muses, to gods and goddesses. Why not devote a little time and trouble to Themis? In mythology, Thastés is represented as a woman, Themis, teaching law to Apollo. Is this not a proof that each woman not only can, but ought, to know law?

In conclusion, I thank from all my heart the Countess of Aberdeen for having given me opportunity to belong to this interesting Congress, where she presides, and where I have heard so many intelligent and instructed persons.

#### DISCUSSION.

**Miss Constance Cochrane.**—We are all aware that a great deal is said and done at the present time in the interests of the children of the State, but there is one aspect of their case that I think deserves special attention, and that is—the way in which deserted children are given back to cruel and unworthy parents. And it is in order to impress upon guardians the extreme importance of adopting all such children (reserving to themselves the option of acting as they think best in each individual case), that I wish to relate the following sad story:—

Two years and nine months ago, three children, aged respectively 11, 8 and 6, were boarded out with my committee and placed in two cottage homes, with a man and his wife and their married daughter.

The children had been deserted by their father five years

previously, and together with their mother had been received into the Union of St Mary, Islington. The mother had died shortly before the children were sent to us. In conversation with the children I learnt that they had an elder sister of 13 in a training home, and after some trouble I traced her to a Roman Catholic home in Croydon, and invited her, through the sister, to pay us a visit. This was not allowed, being against the rules, but the end of it was that the father of the children was found at Croydon, and shortly afterwards he wrote a somewhat violent and unfeeling letter to his son Thomas (boarded out with us), expressing satisfaction that his wife was dead, etc. When Thomas received this letter he was most terribly frightened and upset; he could not eat and was most miserable for some time, and said he would never go back to his father—of whose wickedness and cruelty the boy had often told us. I wrote all this to the guardians, and forwarded to them the father's letter, and implored them not to let him have the children.

A few weeks later my committee was ordered to give up the children, but the guardians would not tell me what was to be done with them. An attendant came to fetch them from St Neat's. The children had been boarded out with us for about six months, and were quite simple and innocent, and very nice children. Imagining they would be taken to Croydon, I wrote to the officer for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and he kindly told me that he had found the children and would keep an eye upon them. Some weeks later the Cruelty officer wrote to me that the conduct of the father was such that the children had been removed from him and placed in homes. I cannot find out exactly how this was brought about.

Then for two years we lost sight of the children. At the beginning of May last I received a pencil note from Thomas, from a home for destitute children at Feltham, saying he was not happy, and would I "please answer as quick as possible." The boy has since told me that his father knew where he was, and might come to see him at any time. I wrote by return a comforting letter, and enclosed six stamps.

A week or two later the boy wrote to me from Maidenhead, saying he had run away from Feltham and was now working in a nursery garden, and might he come and live with me, as he would then feel safe, and would I send his railway fare at once. I did so, and he came the same day he received the letter. He is now comfortably clothed, and is living with the same people that his little sister was boarded out with

before. We hope never to part with him again. He spent the stamps I sent him in taking the train to Maidenhead. According to the boy's story—and we have always found him to be thoroughly truthful—the day after the children left us they were given up to their father (who did not know them) at the prison gates. He had been doing *three weeks for five years'* desertion! He at once took away their money, which village friends had given them, and pawned their best clothes (which they were not wearing) and then took them to a public-house and got drunk. The children were all frightened and crying. Thomas was a teetotaller with us, but his father made him drink.

I have written the case to the guardians, and am informed by their clerk that "The father required the children to be given up, and the guardians could not refuse."

These facts speak for themselves without any further comment from me.

Miss Agnes Slack, referring to the question of boarding out children in England, stated that they had on the platform a woman who knew more about the subject than any other woman in England—Miss Mason, the senior inspector under the Government. She (the speaker) felt there was necessity for inspectors for children inside workhouses as well as those who were boarded out. At the present time it was a crying evil. Another point she would like to refer to was that they must, in the event of any scheme coming before the country for State pensions, insist that respectable poor people should have special consideration. They should oppose any scheme which would give money to people regardless of character.

Miss Mason said she had been asked to tell the meeting something about the machinery in England under which she carried out her work. She might say that the sub-department under which she worked was unique in its way, because it was entirely under the supervision of women. In 1870 the Local Government Board gave permission to Boards of Guardians to board children outside Unions. She was appointed inspector in 1885, and since that time many committees had been formed for the boarding-out of children. She might also mention that since her appointment there had never been any question whether the staff required strengthening or whether it should include men and women. It had always been taken for granted that they should be ladies, and she believed the reason was that it was recognised that there were duties in connection with the

office which could be better accomplished by women. It was essentially a woman's work, and she hoped that many ladies would follow in her lead.

Miss Hasland, of Dublin, stated that after the passing of the Irish Local Government Act in Ireland in 1885, two ladies were appointed guardians at the first election. At the next election, thirteen ladies were elected, and she was glad to say that they now had no less than eighty-five lady guardians in Ireland. Of that number she was very pleased to say a large proportion were Roman Catholics. She had waited upon the Roman Catholic Bishop of Ireland to learn his idea on the subject of ladies sitting on Boards of Guardians, and he had stated that he had no objection to their doing so provided that they did not turn out a good Roman Catholic man. As to the vagrancy question, she thought the tramps in Ireland were not so well treated as they were in England, but she might add that they had no work to do before leaving the house in the morning.

The Rev. W. Ingham Brooks, of Halifax, said he ventured to say a few words against the system of outdoor relief. He had seen the working of the system in many large towns, and he was forced to the opinion that a great deal of the misery of the poor was the result of outdoor relief. He would suggest that no assistance should be given to any person who was in receipt of outdoor relief, for he believed that was the only way of teaching guardians that they must give an adequate sum for the support of outside poor.

Miss Simmons (Bermondsey Settlement) referred to the necessity of women obtaining some training before they undertook Poor Law work. She deprecated very much indeed, in the case of women, the rule of going on Boards without any knowledge of the work. If any mistake was made the male members always said, "That is just like women," and that made it much more difficult for other women to get elected. She owed a great deal to Mr John Burns, who had once told her to "hold her tongue for three months." She had followed that advice to the letter and had never regretted it.

Mrs Greenlees (Glasgow) also condemned the system of outdoor relief, but added that until charges were made it was absolutely impossible for guardians to refuse outdoor relief, and also impossible to give any sum which was adequate.

Mrs Pool (Secretary of the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants) pointed out that when children

were placed out in the world it was necessary that they should be mothered in some way or another. The moment the child left the workhouse and went to service a crop of relations sprang up who did not go to the child for the sake of affection but for the child's wages.

## ADMINISTRATIVE WORK.

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(A) IN EDUCATION.

(B) ON URBAN AND RURAL GOVERNING BODIES.

GREAT HALL, ST MARTIN'S TOWN HALL.

*THURSDAY, JUNE 30, AFTERNOON.*

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LADY KNIGHTLEY, OF FAWSLEY, in the Chair.

Lady Knightley pointed out that as education was very largely in the hands of women as far as the work went, it was only right that they should have a larger share than was yet granted to them on the bodies which determined the lines upon which the education was carried on. As to women on Urban and Rural District Councils, she might mention that she filled the humble office of parish councillor in a small rural parish. As regards women's work, the late division in the House of Lords was very discouraging. She thought it was a shame that women should have been rewarded for their past good work by being denied the right to continue such work. But they must not be discouraged, but do their best and go on and prove that women were fitted for those positions they had already held and also for those to which they were not yet admitted. She would implore all women who had to take part in administrative work to exercise self-control, to learn their work thoroughly, to be wider in their sympathies, and to base all their arguments upon fact. One of the greatest works for women on governing bodies was to act as peacemakers. The presence of a lady did much to tone down the sharp discussions which often took place on those small governing bodies. And now she would venture to give

them a little piece of advice which had been given her by a prominent politician. Firstly, before they brought forward any scheme, they should consult everybody who ought to be consulted on the subject. Whether or not they took the advice was another matter. Secondly, they should not begin by pressing their own opinions on the Boards. Let the men talk first, and when they had got into a hopeless muddle, then they could step in.

## Administrative Work in Education.

Miss Jessie Montgomery (Great Britain).

It is difficult to treat this subject from an international point of view ; for as the organisation of education differs very widely in different countries, so naturally does its administration. One great difference between England and other countries is the place she gives to voluntary effort ; much administrative work which with us is carried out by unprofessional and voluntary workers, is elsewhere not only controlled, but undertaken by the State, and this applies as much to education as to any other branch of national work.

In the present paper I include in the word *Government* or *State* both local and central government, for I do not here propose to enter on the difficult problem of the delimitation of central and local government ; for as we are favoured with the presence of many visitors from other countries, it may be more novel and interesting to them to consider the advantages and disadvantages of Government and voluntary administration.

Education may be administered in four ways : by

1. *State Administration.* This I believe exists in general on the Continent and in America, as regards primary education.

2. *State Direction ; i.e.,* the Government may prescribe certain general principles, leaving the carrying out in detail to voluntary workers. This is the case with our English primary education.

3. *State Control.* Where both organisation and administration are undertaken by voluntary agencies, the State merely intervening as umpire to decide whether these have loyally carried out what they undertook. This applies to much of our English secondary and higher education, and exists also in some

countries on the Continent with regard to schools administered either by a religious or other voluntary agency.

4. *Voluntary Administration individual responsibility*, as in the case of many of our English high schools and all private schools.

Now to consider these in more detail.

1. *Government Administration*. The satisfactory working of this principle must depend largely on the nature of the Government. If this be sufficiently democratic to represent truthfully the national will, and if an enlightened public opinion exists on the subject of education, certain advantages may undoubtedly be claimed for it; *e.g.*, the unity of education will be recognised, there will be a clear and definite scheme of national education in which the interests of all sections of the community can be duly adjusted, none being unjustly subordinated to the other; and if there be an intelligent appreciation of educational needs, the necessary funds will be forthcoming, for the nation will be ready to tax itself to supply a national want. On the other hand, there is the danger of unity degenerating into uniformity, and the possibility of an efficient mechanical routine hiding the want of a progressive spirit. For the standard of education being necessarily set by the governing majority, to whom education is only one among many branches of public work, it is not easy for the few specialists who have given time to the scientific study of general principles, and who also have experience of their working, it is not easy, I say, for them to induce the Government to listen to the results obtained. Education then will only move *pari passu* with national life and thought, and its progress will be a symptom, not a means, of advance. And from the point of view of the present Congress, women will be cut off from any share in administrative work, since, at any rate in Europe, they have nowhere any part in central or local government, either personally or by proxy.

2 and 3. The second and third methods — *Government Direction and Government Control* — may be considered together, since they are only modifications of the same system of co-operation between the collectivist and individualist principle; in the first case the Government, in the second the voluntary agency being the predominant partner. Which *should* take the initiative seems to me to depend on the circumstances of each case. I may, of course, be prejudiced in favour of a specially English method of working, but I must own to a strong belief in the value of this co-operation as a means of bringing into



combined action forces which are truly complementary, but are capable of becoming antagonistic. Thus voluntary agencies can make, and are morally justified in making, experiments, while the State is rightly cautious; but voluntary administrators, if they are wise, will gladly submit their experiments to the test of Government supervision, being conscious that their position will be all the stronger if they can bear criticism.

And again, voluntary administration may be deficient in any satisfactory guarantee of continuity and permanency; this the State can supply.

But consider the enormous amount of valuable administrative educational work done in England by School Boards, Boards of Managers, Technical Management Committees and Poor Law Guardians. In all these cases the State lays down general principles, but the administrative work is undertaken by voluntary workers, of whom a large and increasing number are women—few I think now will deny with great advantage to the community.

There are many reasons why women can render excellent service in these directions. Those who take up such work usually make it their principal work, while men, as a rule, can only give the time and thought which can be spared from professional duties. Again, the success of such work depends largely on attention to detail, and women's training gives them the habit of considering minutiae.

And what is far more important, education, if it means the training of character, means individual interest; this again can best be shown by those who have leisure and the habit and power of feeling and showing sympathy, which women's home training tends to give them. To the Government individuals are but "cases"—units forming wheels in a vast machine. Voluntary workers can hunt out "cases" till they are realised as living children, needing not only justice but friendly sympathy. Especially does this apply to the poor little waifs and strays of humanity whom we call, by a fine irony, "the children of the State."

We are all of us, and children especially, so made that we cannot *love* an abstraction like the State; and love is the fundamental principle in a child's education. The State may indeed decree with wisdom and justice the general lines on which these children are to be brought up, but it is to the voluntary workers, and especially to the women amongst them, that these poor children can look for the friendship and help

and sympathy which can come only of personal knowledge. We shall never know how much has been done for that true higher education, the building up of character, among the children in workhouses, reformatories and industrial schools by these men and women who have voluntarily devoted themselves to carrying out in a spirit of love the hard, practical common-sense regulations of the State.

Here I should like to say that many School Boards and Boards of Guardians have appointed Ladies' Visiting Committees. This is doubtless a step in the right direction, but it is not enough, nor do I consider the principle quite the right one. To be really useful these ladies want power, and power should be accompanied by direct responsibility. I would, therefore, urge more women to take up such work seriously, not in any amateur spirit, but with the resolve to give all that in them lies, to put their best at the disposal of the ratepayers, and to use the powers bestowed by them as a directly-given charge.

Consider again the good result of co-operation between the Government and voluntary agencies in the case of our endowed schools. We may, and we certainly do, see room for much modification and readjustment here; but we cannot doubt that these schools have been a blessing to thousands. And how much they owe to individual administrators! Systems do indeed form individuals, but systems have usually sprung from one far-seeing individual; as Emerson reminds us that every great historical event existed originally only in one man's mind. And it is not of State-made schemes that we think with the deepest gratitude when we speak of our endowed schools—it is of men like Colet and Arnold and Thring, who made dry bones live.

On the other hand, we are deeply sensible that in countless cases these endowed schools had fallen quite away from their early ideals, and that it was the power of the State to enforce a return to their schemes or to modify them in the letter, to make them carry out the spirit of their founder's intentions, which saved them for the nation. Especially we may rejoice, that whereas in many cases endowments intended for boys and girls alike had been devoted for years exclusively to boys, now the girls have in many cases secured their due share.

And to speak of another instance of educational work due to "the pious founders of old, but kept by the restraining hand of the Government within the bounds of statutes," look at the

unique position of our old Universities. In no other country is there the same widespread love, felt not only by their own sons but by the nation at large, for Oxford and Cambridge, for nowhere else are the Universities so truly *national*, while maintaining their own corporate life. And owing to their freedom, how they have been able to keep pace with the changing needs of the nation, by admitting non-collegiate students, by adding new schools and tripos, and by admitting women to examination (when shall we be able to add to degrees?). And by their system of Local Examinations they have raised the whole standard of school teaching in the country; and by means of University Extension they hold out a helping hand to those who are obliged to work when they would desire to study, but who can now study under University influence even while they are working for a livelihood.

In administering locally these systems of Local Examinations and Local Lectures, women have played a very large part; and in at least four instances, viz., at Nottingham, Reading, Exeter and Colchester, permanent municipal colleges have developed from these voluntary efforts, and still retain a large proportion of the voluntary element, combined with the stability that comes from civic support.

4. *Voluntary Administration*.—I have left myself but little time to speak of purely voluntary work, and yet of that much might be said, especially with regard to the provision of education for girls and women. The Public Day Schools Company, the Church of England High Schools Company, the Women's Colleges at Oxford, Cambridge and elsewhere, were all the results of voluntary effort, and are administered by voluntary workers, very largely by women. Where so many have helped it would be invidious to mention individuals; but we cannot help gratefully recalling the work of Lady Stanley of Alderley, Miss Gough and Miss Buss, all of whom have passed away, as well as of many who are, happily for us, still carrying on their labour of love.

Then there are the private schools. I am of those who believe and hope that they will continue to exist. There will always be abnormal children, requiring abnormal treatment; there will always be educational geniuses (at least let us hope so!), artists in education, whose work, if at first experimental, may be the seed of much valuable progress, for the "faddists" of one generation are often the reformers of the next. These need a free hand to develop their work according to the life

that is in them. They must be allowed to originate and develop their own plans, only we hope that ere long some slight measure of State control will be secured by the enforced registration of teachers, which all good teachers will welcome.

One other purely voluntary system of educational administration may be mentioned, viz., that of the large industrial co-operative societies, who devote annually between £40,000 and £50,000 to education. We co-operators know best how much room there is here for improvement. We are learning in a somewhat costly fashion, I will not say by our failures, but by our inadequate success. Still, we *are* learning, and co-operative women, too, are learning by means of the Women's Guild.

I am painfully conscious how absolutely incomplete and inadequate all I have tried to say is. I wrote it in Tyrol, far away from all means of reference or verification. The moral that, to me at least, stands out clearly is this—education is a sacred and a living thing, a wind blowing where it listeth; it has indeed its own laws, and strict ones too, but maybe we have not yet discovered them all. It must be organised that it may be free, but it must be free that it may be effectual. And, being free, no machinery, however perfect, can supersede the need for human effort and human sympathy.

In this Women's Congress, may I close with some words of our greatest English poetess?

"Life means, be sure  
Both heart and head—both active, both complete,  
And both in earnest.  
Work, man, work, woman, since there's work to do  
On this beleaguered earth for head and heart,  
And thought can never do the work of Love.  
It takes a soul  
To move a body, it takes a high-souled man  
To move the masses, even to a clearer stage.  
Ah! Dr Fouriers failed  
Because not poet enough to understand  
That life develops from within."

The form is very important; yes, but

"Trust the spirit to make the form,"

if the form is to be the incarnation and not the gaol of the spirit, "which things are an allegory," and have their strict application to the organisation and administration of education.

## DISCUSSION.

Miss Honnor Morten pointed out that they had three women inspectors under the Education Department, which was certainly a step in the right direction. As to secondary education she might point out they had some women on the Commission which sat on that subject, and she felt assured that if proper representation was made to the Duke of Devonshire, a place for women would be found on the governing body which was to be appointed. At the present time they had 200 women on School Boards throughout the country. Since the opportunity had been given them, 26 women had sat on the London School Board—a body, with perhaps one exception, as the largest municipal body in the world. They had 890,000 children under their care, and the number of female teachers in 1897 amounted to 71,200, being two-thirds of the total number. The question might be asked, What class of woman gained most success on that body? She had put the question to a number of people, and the unanimous decision resulted in the following names:—Mrs Westlake, Miss Davenport Hill, and Mrs Homan. Those names were not familiar to the public, but they had become known to their *confrères* as women with large administrative capabilities, which had been gained by steady and persistent work. Miss Morten closed her remarks by telling a story of an inspector—a man—who reported in writing to his department, “that the mental arithmetic of the babies in a certain school was very defective.” Which assertion, said Miss Morten, only emphasised the fact that more lady inspectors were much needed.

Miss Montgomery then read the following paper:—

## Administrative Work for Women on Urban and Rural Governing Bodies.

Miss Alice E. Busk (Southwark).

WHEN the Local Government Act of 1894 was passed, women were for the first time, in clear and definite terms, admitted to

take part in the work of London Vestries, of Urban and of Rural District Councils, and of Parish Councils.

As a member of a Vestry since November 1894, I propose first to consider how this invitation to work—if such it may be called—has been responded to by women in London; and, secondly, to give such detailed information as I have been able to gather as to the way in which the same work has been taken up in town and country districts.

There were not wanting women who realised, as soon as the Act was passed, that a wide sphere of usefulness had been opened to them, and at the first elections a certain number were returned throughout the country. It is to be regretted that more women did not avail themselves of the opportunity thus offered; this was probably due to the fact that the public at large hardly realised the scope of the work dealt with by these local authorities. There prevailed a general idea that Guardians dealt with persons, and that Vestries and Councils dealt only with things, and that the details of official work were wearisome, because the results were not commensurate with the labour involved.

No heresy is more dangerous. The bane of local self-government in London is the lack of interest on the part of the Electorate. The well-to-do shut their eyes to their municipal responsibilities, despising the day of small things. They have the fear neither of God nor of Tammany before their eyes. The working class are so ignorant of the extent to which local self-government may improve the circumstances and conditions of their lives, that they will not even take the trouble to vote. Such would appear to be the main reasons which actuated the Legislature in introducing its London Government Bill.

The Government decided, quite rightly as I think, to try by some extraordinary means to arouse in the minds of Londoners some interest in their own local affairs, in the hope, I suppose, that if the local authority were given a new name, that public spirit which is to be found in boroughs might be born in London. So far none of us can object. It is a laudable aspiration, with which all must sympathise; though we do not expect very much result we may smile complacently. But some of the supporters of the Government are anxious to exclude women altogether, as though there were a plethora of administrative ability waiting for gratuitous employment at the hands of the locality. As a matter of fact, administrative capacity is

rare, and in men commands a high salary in the open market, because, as administrative capacity begets money, shareholders and directors are willing to pay handsomely for it. The result is, that if a man has real administrative capacity or experience, he has so many openings that he will not undertake local administrative work. Such work is unknown—it is unnoticed and unrewarded, it is dull, it is humdrum, it leads nowhere, neither to knighthoods nor peerages. How badly soever the work is done, the well-to-do Londoner's pocket is not seriously affected, and there lies his conscience; the society of his colleagues, he tells you, would not be congenial; he does not choose to have flung at him the gibes of the little local newspaper. Such excuses are common. Most men of position and influence are too sensitive, too highly strung, to face this kind of thing; they cannot and will not put up with it; and we know that, as it brings no tangible reward, so of course they have no time to undertake it. All these excuses we accept. We only ask why should not women be allowed to take part in this work if they are willing and can get elected? The most capable men will not touch it; why may not we try? We do not ask that the electors should be compelled to return us, only that they may be allowed to do so if so disposed.

I am anxious not to exaggerate the latent capacities of my own sex; but I do not hesitate to affirm that there are women with administrative capacity and leisure who would discharge, with credit to themselves and benefit to the community, such duties as come within the scope of a local authority.

Now it goes without saying that the method of procedure upon all public bodies must be thoroughly learned by all who propose to take a part in their deliberations. One of our most experienced Vestry women relates that for some years previous to her election she had regularly availed herself of the rate-payers' privilege of attending the meetings as a listener; and to this no doubt may be attributed the grasp which she now has of all the subjects with which the Vestry deals. Candidates must also make themselves familiar with the various powers that can be exercised under the different Acts of Parliament affecting their work. There is no need to labour the point, for the old adage holds true on Vestries as elsewhere—"Knowledge is power." The solution of some difficulty, the defeat of some unscrupulous opponent, often depends on familiarity with the Act or bye-law dealing with the particular case.

The ideal candidate of the future will be one who not only

takes real interest in the welfare of the community, but who can also devote a large share of his time and thought to the work of the various Committees. For we must bear in mind that if other interests lead him to shirk the Committee work, much of the power will lapse into the hands of officials, and the whole object of the new Bill be defeated.

Facts speak for themselves, and that women have proved useful members of their various Boards cannot be doubted, for we find that they are serving in every department of Vestry work. They are members of such Committees as the following:—Finance, Public Health, Works, General Purposes, Lighting, Parliamentary, and Parish Boundaries. They are, besides, Commissioners of Public Libraries, and of Baths and Wash-houses, and Trustees of Parochial Charities, and one woman has been appointed an overseer.

Writing as I do in the third week in May, whilst the London Government Bill is in Committee and the whole future of my subject is, so to speak, in the lap of the gods, I feel that I may claim from my hearers a little sympathy. I cannot but be aware that before this paper is read it may have been put practically out of our power to take our share in improving the Local Government of London. I prefer, however, to believe that Parliament in its wisdom will see fit to allow women to continue the work in which only five years ago they were definitely called to take part.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies once described Local Government as "offering the widest possible field for beneficent activity. By it," he said, "you can bring to all those opportunities, necessities and luxuries which otherwise would be but for the enjoyment of the few; by good Local Government you can improve the condition of the people, and confer on them health, comfort, recreation and education."

Let me now tell you something of the recent work of my own Vestry, to show how in a little known part of London we have been trying, however imperfectly, to reach out after this ideal.

Mr Charles Booth, in his "Life and Labour of the People," describes the neighbourhood of St George the Martyr, Southwark, as the poorest in London. The district is flat and low-lying, being situated below the level of the Thames high-water mark; the population is 212 to the acre, and the death-rate, though diminishing, is still far too high.

First as regards the poverty of the parish. Feeling the futility of the existing system of Christmas doles, the Vestry



drew up a scheme for the reform of the parochial charities. This scheme has been accepted almost in its entirety by the Charity Commissioners, and henceforth there will be the permanent benefit of pensions for the aged. A certain sum can be annually spent on nursing for the sick poor, or perchance it may bring within their reach the new scientific treatment of phthisis.

A very congenial work now brought to a successful issue has been the erection of the Public Library for this poor parish. In consequence of the generous offer of £5000 from Mr Passmore Edwards, the parish has polled on the question of the adoption of the Public Library Acts. The canvassing was largely carried out by ladies, and resulted in a majority of over 1800 for the adoption of the Acts. Commissioners were appointed by the Vestry, and in the first three months that our library has been opened, 1600 persons have enrolled themselves as members.

In such a parish there is a vast amount of detailed work for the Sanitary Authority to do; and women on the Board who are in touch with the poor and understand all the questions from their point of view, can give valuable help in various directions. Our disinfecting department has been completely re-organised; and the Vestry has built, on the advice of the Medical Officer of Health, a reception house for the use of the relatives of infected patients. When a patient is removed to hospital, the home whence the removal has taken place must be disinfected; and the dwellers in one or two-roomed tenements are invited meanwhile to make use of the reception house. They can remain there for two nights if necessary, baths are provided, and their clothes are thoroughly disinfected before they return home. As there are no compulsory powers in London, we feared that our reception house, like so many others, would have proved a failure; but we have happily succeeded in establishing such an *entente cordiale* with the poor that they really like their temporary home, and are willing therefore to use it.

The same friendly spirit has actuated us in the work of our tenement inspection.

Contrary to received notions, we appointed in 1896 a woman inspector to measure up and place upon the register our lowest class houses let in lodgings. So successful has she been in preventing over-crowding, in instructing the tenants in cleanliness, in insuring ventilation, and in getting the landlords to keep the tenements in proper condition of repair, that we have just appointed an additional woman for the same work; and the question of adding a third to our staff has already been mooted.

The infant death-rate per thousand is excessive ; the services therefore of kindly and highly-trained women are much wanted in our crowded courts and alleys, to teach the simplest lessons as to how children should be fed, washed, clothed and reared. Much suffering and death would be prevented were the sanitary authorities to provide such instruction. Liverpool has already eight women employed in such ways as I have described, but in London generally the need does not seem yet to have been recognised.

Two disused burying-grounds were our only open spaces : but to these we are just adding a real garden, and when some of our condemned courts are pulled down we hope to gain yet another open space.

For all our blocks of dwellings—and we have more than our share—we need further powers. The staircase question is one that presses ! Where staircases remain open from the street, lights should burn all night, and gates, as far as possible, should be closed at midnight.

Owners, too, should be made responsible for proper supervision of their dwellings by night as well as by day. Evidence on this matter has been collected by women, and much more could and should be gathered. Either the police should control the staircases, or the landlord should be forced to provide night watchmen.

Surely we have had the question with us long enough, for were we not startled into knowledge of it in 1888, when, on the staircase of a block of dwellings, was committed the first of that series of terrible crimes known as the Whitechapel murders ? I speak from my own experience, inasmuch as it was my lot to take over the management of the building the week after that event had taken place. Yet the condition which made that possible still prevails ; and, to the fear and misery of our respectable poor, their staircases and passages are often taken possession of at night by the lowest outcasts of the city.

It is possible that in the future the supervision of common lodging-houses may be transferred to the Borough Councils. Should this be so there ought to be women on those councils who would move for various improvements in the existing lodging-houses.

What could be more degrading, for instance, than that men and women should use one common washing-place—and this, sometimes, a shed in the yard, open on three sides ? Yet, according to latest official report, not in Southwark only, but elsewhere

in London, this is often the case—Kensington heading the list with nine common lodging-houses in which no separate provision is made. I will give but one illustration of the need of reform. Last year, in a lodging-house in my own ward, a young woman was kicked to death by the man with whom she was living, and this under the eyes of two innocent girls of 13 and 15, who had drifted into the house!

Had women a voice in the matter the so-called "doubles" would speedily be abolished, separate houses would be opened for women, women deputies would be appointed, and stringent regulations would be enforced to prevent the young frequenting these houses.

Think for a moment, if we were on the bodies that control these houses, what a strong helping hand we could hold out to those noble women—the very salt of the earth—who face the horrors even of common lodging-houses in order to help out of them one here and there.

I must not weary you with more local details: all I have desired to show is that there is in London a very real need of women's help in many departments. More than this, five years' practical experience of women's work on the Board has caused our Vestry to send to the Government the unanimous recommendation that women should be eligible for election to Borough Councils.

I pass now to the consideration of the work of District Councils, for I rejoice to think that here at anyrate women's work as citizens has an ensured future.

As no lists are published of the members of District and Parish Councils, I have found it a little difficult to gather information. For such details as I have received of work throughout the country, I am indebted to the courtesy and kindness of various individuals.

The principal functions of Urban Councils are "to look after the health and comfort of the inhabitants by enforcing the sanitary laws, providing pure water, good roads and footways, proper lighting at night, and regulating the erection of dwellings and the width and construction of streets."

So far very few women have offered themselves for election, though the work is much the same as on the Rural Councils. I feel I cannot do better than quote the opinion of a lady who has had four years' experience. She says: "On Urban District Councils there is plenty for a woman to do." She was herself on the Sanitary, Fire Brigade, Hospital, Commons Allotments,

and Housing of the Working Classes Committees. Being an Irishwoman, she even took special interest in the building of the stables and the choosing of the horses. She found the work fascinating, and during her four years of office, allotments for working men were secured and workmen's dwellings were erected. So well satisfied was she with the administration of the isolation hospital, that at different times four of her children were sent there as inmates, and she pronounces the duties to be performed on an Urban District Council to be so many and varied that there must be some work to suit everyone's taste.

Rural District Councils were brought into existence by the Local Government England and Wales Act, 1894. Prior to the passing of this Act the elected guardian became, by virtue of his office, a member of the Rural Sanitary Authority, but under the new order of things the Rural District Councillor is elected and thereby becomes a member of the Board of Guardians.

As far as I can ascertain there have been about 150 women thus returned in England and Wales, and they appear to be throwing themselves with persistent energy into their duties as guardians; but of all that they do in that way, and as members of Boarding-out and School Attendance Committees, I am not qualified to speak.

A smaller number have realised that, by taking part in the sanitary work of their neighbourhood, they can dig down to the root of some of those evils with which as Poor Law Guardians they must deal. To quote the words of one very experienced member: "the Rural District Council is the preventive agency, the Board of Guardians the curative. Common sense tells us which is the more needful—may I make bold to say the more sacred—work."

Those of us who live in cities are thankful to feel that our sisters in the country are being brought face to face with the difficulties of housing, so that they may realise how year by year they have been allowing the burden to slip off their shoulders on to ours. Out of 200 rural districts of which I have some particulars, in portions 53 more cottages are urgently needed. Such an outlook is indeed serious, when we remember the depopulated districts of England, and how little attraction our rural populations need to induce them to migrate to the towns. In questions of rural sanitation, I am informed, a laywoman's ideas are generally in advance of a layman's, though he be neither a farmer nor a landlord. But so great seems the innovation that one medical

officer could only say, in the strictest confidence, that in many ways women's help is much needed. When women assume their proper place on these councils, what work do they undertake? Let me attempt to describe it in a sentence. They are responsible for the maintenance of the high roads, for the drainage of the district, for the proper sanitation of the houses, for providing a pure water supply (and in this way much has lately been done); they are charged with enforcing bye-laws with regard to new dwellings; they have to supervise isolation hospitals, etc. Here especially one feels how useful they may be. All arrangements for nursing should be their special work, and when one hears of an isolation hospital sometimes so overcrowded that boys and girls have had to share the same ward, when it has been known that two boys of 15 and 12 have had, when fever patients, to share a bed 2 feet 6 inches wide, when a nurse takes night and day duty and cooks also for the patients, surely Mr Boulnois would admit that even women might with advantage look into these matters. One lady speaks of the work of the Council as "plodding and useful"; another says how helpful it would be if "thoughtful outsiders would stay for a short time in the villages to offer suggestions and to brighten everyone up." A third, speaking from experience, recommends that sanitary inspectors should be constantly moved from district to district; and in truth one can see the force of this, for to do any good they must make themselves unpleasant to landlords and to farmers alike. And it is not easy even for a man to be doing, day by day, and week by week, those things which his most powerful neighbours regard as amounting to personal affronts.

Of Parish Councils it is difficult to get many particulars, but I gather that something under a hundred women have been elected to serve upon them.

In many places the interest in Parish Councils flags. The heart is taken out of them by the single fact that the community is small and that the vote is taken by show of hands. This in a gathering composed of employers and employed must reduce the vote to an absolute farce. It is sometimes said that the powers of Parish Councils are so small that it is hardly worth anyone's while to serve, but I confess I am inclined to hold a different view. Those who are willing to think out patiently how they can help their neighbours, seem to find that they can do much indirectly by putting other forces into motion,

and not a little directly to improve village life. The administration of the parochial charities, the management of village greens and recreation grounds, the preservation of foot-paths, the appointment of overseers, the administration of any of the adoptive Acts relating to lighting, baths and wash-houses and public libraries are in the power of the Parish Councils.

Where much had been accomplished by any council it seems to have been generally by the leading of one individual. There is one active Parish Council which has succeeded in carrying through the Housing of the Working Classes Act, Part III., for Rural Districts. The Act is difficult to work, for not only has the consent of the District Council first to be obtained, but the County Council must also hold an enquiry before the Local Government Board will, after a final enquiry on its own account, give sanction for raising a loan to purchase land and build. The same Parish Council has provided allotments, and has secured from its District Council analyses of water when required, and has also had transferred to it the power of providing isolation hospital accommodation.

I fear that I have already trespassed too long upon your patience, and I must draw these disjointed observations to a close.

In conclusion, I should like to acknowledge how much I am indebted to many country ladies for their information. If you had had the pleasure of reading the letters of these women councillors, I think you would have been impressed by the kindly spirit, the hopefulness, the earnestness, and the "sweet reasonableness" of the writers. Such women as these are a strength to the nation and a bright example. May we in London, if we are allowed to share in its government, in some measure reproduce their spirit, and serve as loyally as they are doing the highest interests of our fellow-citizens.

#### DISCUSSION.

Mrs Fuller, Wiltshire, said they must thank Miss Busk for her valuable paper. Miss Busk had spoken about the usefulness of women on Vestries in London, but Mrs Fuller (the speaker) was convinced that the same need existed over the whole country. Some of them must think that the need of cottages was not felt in the country, but she could assure them that in her village home, in Wiltshire, the need of cottages was a crying evil. She felt sure that if they could get better housing accommodation, it

would be a means of keeping the people in the country districts. When they knew the discomforts under which villagers lived, the meeting could not wonder that they were anxious when they became adults to leave the villages and enjoy the greater comforts of the towns.

Mrs Elmley spoke of the defeat which women had sustained in the House of Lords a few nights before, and stated that a few moments after the division had taken place another division took place, and only 80 peers had taken part. There could be no doubt that a number of young peers went to the house with sole intention of defeating the Bill. She would impress upon her hearers the necessity of always finding out in what position their respective parliamentary representatives stood in the question.

Miss Isabella A. Ford gave it as her experience that overcrowding was much more prevalent in the country districts than in towns. The water and gas supply was *nil*—in fact, everything seemed to be *nil* except dung heaps. The necessity for women on Parish Councils was great, for there was an enormous amount of work awaiting them.

Miss Ravenhill called attention to the work which was being done by the Women's Co-operative Guild in teaching women the powers exercised by local governing bodies. The need for such knowledge amongst women was very great, but she did not believe that any movement had been made in that direction by any Society, with the exception of one she had mentioned. The work had been most successful, and the result was that the male members of the Co-operative Society pushed the subject forward and last year had obtained the services of the lecturer for the men.

Mrs Henry called attention to the fact that the Local Government Board would not sanction a loan for isolation hospitals unless they were built of brickwork. The result of that was that there was a large number of tin sheds scattered all over the country, which were made to do service for hospitals. These were under the care of medical officers, but as a general rule no inspection ever took place. In the parish from which she came, the nurse had to live there alone, and do everything that was necessary for the patients, from cooking to nursing. Many of the hospitals were unfit for habitation.

Mrs Stanbury appealed to all ladies present to work through the medium of an organisation, and called attention to the work which was being done by the Women's Local Government Society

in London. They had heard that day of the great good that had been done by one woman in Suffolk, and she asked them to imagine the work which could be accomplished if they had a thousand such women working in an organised body.

Miss Constance Cochrane spoke of her experience as Chairman of a Parish Council, and gave instances showing the need for the intervention of women, especially in regard to the unsanitary and overcrowded condition of many country cottages.



# POLITICAL ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN.

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PUBLIC MEETING AT QUEEN'S HALL,  
LANGHAM PLACE.

THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 1899, 8 p.m.

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[*THE meeting, of which the following is the report, was organised by the Political Sectional Committee, as first constituted by the Sub-Committee of Arrangements, but the President having felt it incumbent on her to press on the attention of the Committee the fact that the constitution of the International Council of Women did not permit it to identify itself with a propaganda of a controversial nature, and that, therefore, an opportunity must be afforded for both sides of any controversy to be presented at any meeting directly organised by the Council, the Convener, the Hon. Mrs Arthur Lyttelton, and some members of the Committee found it necessary to retire. It was ultimately arranged that the Queen's Hall meeting should be taken over by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, leaving the other meetings of the Political Section to be carried through by a re-constituted committee, under the convenership of Miss Lidgett.*

*The Queen's Hall meeting remained, however, on the time-table of the meetings of the International Congress of Women, and was very largely attended by its members, who took the deepest and most enthusiastic interest in its proceedings. The Editor is much indebted to Mrs*

*Fawcett of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies for furnishing her with an admirable report of the meeting, from which the following account has been prepared]:—*

This was a meeting arranged to welcome the delegates from abroad attending the International Congress of Women, then holding its quinquennial session in London. Mrs Fawcett, LL.D., presided. Amongst those present on the platform were:—Mrs Benson; the Countess of Aberdeen; Lady Henry Somerset; Miss Susan B. Anthony (U.S.A.); Mr Faithful Begg, M.P.; Hon. Mrs Arthur Lyttleton; Hon. W. P. Reeves (Agent-General for New Zealand); Mrs Wynford Philipps; Frau Stritt; Mr J. T. Firbank, M.P.; Sir William Wedderburn, Bt., M.P.; Sir Wilfred Lawson, Bt., M.P.; Mr Walter Hazell, M.P.; Mr W. Johnston, M.P.; Mr Charles M'Laren, M.P.; Mr John Wilson, M.P. (Govan); Lady Laura Ridding; Dr Beddoe, F.R.S.; and Mrs Beddoe; Mrs Carmichael Stopes; Mrs Eva M'Laren; Lady Helen Munro Ferguson; Miss Emily Davies; Miss Ellaby, M.D.; Hon. Mrs Bertram Russell; Mr and Mrs Russell Cooke; Lady Grove; Miss Honnor Morten; Mr and Mrs Fisher Unwin; Lady Marjorie Gordon; Mr Dhadabai Naoroji; Mr Mark Oldroyd, M.P., and Mrs Oldroyd; Lieut.-Col. J. W. Lawrie, M.P., and Mrs Lawrie; Sir John Leng, M.P., and Lady Leng; Mr and Mrs Haslam (Dublin); Miss Blackburn; Mrs J. C. Croly (U.S.A.); Miss Bunney (Secretary Women's Liberal Federation); Mrs Charles Baxter; Miss Palliser; Miss Roper (Secretaries to the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies).

The following delegates of the International Congress also supported the Chairman on the platform:—Mrs May Wright Sewell (U.S.A.); Baroness Alexandra Gripenberg (Finland); Madame von F. de Mountford (Palestine); Mrs Willoughby Cummings (Canada); Mrs Frank Gibbs (Canada); Mlle. Monod (France); Mrs Gawler (South Australia); Mrs Armitage (New South Wales); Dr Cecilia Grierson, M.D. (Argentine Republic); Mrs Charlotte Perkins Stetson (U.S.A.); Dr Aletta Jacobs, Mr C. V. Gerritsen, Miss M. G. Kramers, Miss Klerck van Hogendorp, Mrs Rutgers-Hoitsema (Holland); Miss Ellen Sandelin, M.D. (Sweden); Frau Cauer, Frau Dr Selenka, Anita Augspurg, Fräulein Pappritz and Fräulein Dr Schirmacher (Germany); Mdle. Vidart (Switzerland); Fröken Gina Krog (Norway).

Mrs Fawcett, LL.D., opened the proceedings by expressing

the great pleasure it was to her, on behalf of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, to welcome there that night so many of the delegates attending the great International Congress of Women from all parts of the world. She regretted to have to announce two disappointments; Mr Leonard Courtney, their staunch friend, was unfortunately detained in the House of Commons by pressing political work, and Dr Cockburn, who had had charge of the Women's Franchise Bill when it became law in South Australia, was unhappily prevented from attending owing to domestic bereavement. Mrs Fawcett then went on to say,—We are now at a moment of very exceptional interest. Within the last few days in London there have been events of particular importance as regards the Women's Movement. I refer more especially to the Jubilee of Bedford College and to two great International Congresses which have been held in London, one of which is still in Session, and many members of which we very heartily welcome among us to-night. Another interesting event, but one of a less satisfactory kind, is that which took place on Monday last, when the right of women to be elected as councillors and aldermen in the new London Bill was contemptuously rejected by the House of Lords. I think we may learn something from all these events. From the Educational Jubilee we may learn courage and hope; who among those gallant pioneers who worked for the Educational Movement fifty years ago could have foreseen the great triumph of their cause? What prospect did there then seem of opening University Education to women in England and in nearly every country in Europe? To speak of our own country only, out of 12 universities, 9 are entirely open to women, and of the other 3, 2 have opened their educational facilities and highest examinations to women. The fountains of knowledge are no longer sealed to those of both sexes who wish to drink of them. The work of opening the avenues of the higher education to women has been completely done; that should give us hope and should make us go on in the work on which we are engaged with unfaltering courage and determination. If we look for a moment at those two great International Congresses, I think that they, too, have their lesson for us. They show the enormous vitality and the strength of this Women's Movement in which we are engaged. Probably every country in Europe, besides the United States, Australia and our other colonies, have sent representatives to these Congresses, giving an idea of the world-wide nature of this movement which

has gradually changed the ideals of women and the general conception of woman's place in society. Now, if we look for a moment at the least satisfactory of the three events I have mentioned—I mean the rejection of Clause 2 of the London Government Bill by the House of Lords—I think we may learn something from that also. Unfortunately, the spectacle of the House of Lords pursuing the “Gentle art of making Enemies” is not altogether unknown in English politics. The House of Lords has given us proof of the extent of the disapproval with which they regard the work of women on elected bodies in devoting themselves to alleviating the misery and distress of the lowest and most miserable portion of the population. But if we look at this question, I think we shall find some consolatory aspects connected with it, to which I shall briefly direct your attention. First of all, I think this action of the House of Lords will have some effect in gaining us converts to the cause of Women's Suffrage. There are many fair-minded friends—men and women—who will say that if such treatment is to be accorded to women who have done good work in the past—that they are to be rejected with contumely from being allowed to continue that good work in the future—that is additional proof that the only safeguard against this kind of thing is the possession of the Parliamentary Franchise. In words, which during the last few weeks have been very frequently found in the press—though not in reference to our question—these events have proved that “the possession of the franchise is of the first importance,” and when once it is carried, other grievances will redress themselves automatically without any further struggle. There is another source of consolation also to which I want briefly to refer. I feel, as would be acknowledged too by the majority in the House of Lords themselves—that the moral and intellectual weight of the House of Lords was with those who supported Clause 2. I refer particularly to the noble speech of Lord Salisbury, which in some degree compensates us for the disappointment we feel at the result of the division. I feel that the speech Lord Salisbury made on our behalf on Monday night will go far in the future to place him in the same category as that in which a former great Prime Minister, Pitt, now stands in the estimation of his successors, from the fact that years and years before those causes were supported by any political party, he stood out before his king and country as the advocate of the abolition of the Slave Trade and of Catholic disabilities. I think Lord

Salisbury will occupy a similar rank in the estimation of the future by the fine stand he made for us on this question. There is one more point I should like to urge upon you, especially upon the attention of our foreign friends present to-night, and that is that the point argued in the House of Lords last Monday was not the question of Women's Franchise; the question of women voting in the London local elections was not raised in any way. Even those who must sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death as regards this question never had the temerity to raise a voice against the right of women to vote in these local elections. That battle has been won and won thoroughly all over the British Islands. What was done on Monday was the denial of the right of women to sit on municipal councils. The right of women to sit on these bodies is a very different matter—or rather, I should say, the right of the London ratepayer to be represented by that person whom he feels is best fitted to serve him.

We often hear a great deal about the thin end of the wedge. This seems to me a most unfortunate simile. We know what a wedge is—it is a foreign body of inanimate matter driven by force into an inert mass, generally also of inanimate matter, with the object of splitting or dividing it. Our movement does not represent anything of that sort. It represents an organic living force with all the strength behind it which vitality and vitality alone can give. We do not seek to drive into society something foreign to its own nature. We claim to be a part of the society in which we live, a living outgrowth of its energy; and we find a proof of this in the fact that this outgrowth is to be found in every country of progressive Western civilisation. If we look at Russia, Scandinavia, Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, or even Spain and Italy, and last, but not least, at the great English-speaking nations—the United States, the United Kingdom and her Colonies—we see in every one of them that this Movement is a movement of living growth and vitality. It is this which causes us to feel that it is a power which will continue to grow in the future. I wish it had been possible at this meeting to call on representatives of all these nations to tell us of the progress of this Movement in their own countries. For obvious reasons, that was not possible, and therefore we have made this meeting a congratulatory one—a meeting of welcome to the foreign delegates who are attending the International Congress. We shall ask a few of them to tell us what means they have found the most effective in carrying out the

work in their own countries and bringing it to a successful issue.

**Mr Faithful Begg, M.P.**, said :—No one is more entitled to the place of honour on this occasion than Mr Courtney, and I exceedingly regret that his unfortunate absence should cause this duty to devolve upon me. The resolution I have the honour to move is as follows :—

“That this meeting of Women’s Suffragists of Great Britain and Ireland offers a hearty welcome to delegates from all parts of the world, now attending the International Congress of Women, who have, in many instances, successfully striven to promote the great movement for the recognition of the citizenship of women by opening to them the political franchise. We thank them for the grand lead they have given us, and we, in our turn, desire to give a good lead to those nations and colonies less advanced than ourselves. We feel that it lies with the United Kingdom and her Colonies, and the United States of America, to carry forward and complete the principle of representing institutions, and to demonstrate to the world that the representation of the people means representation of the whole people, and is manifestly incomplete as long as a whole sex is excluded.”

As Mrs Fawcett has said, in her opening remarks, we have succeeded, within recent years, in gaining a remarkable triumph, and I am very hopeful that, as time goes on, we shall be able to carry still further the object we all have so much at heart. Our Chairman referred to the consolatory aspects of the question at present. Perhaps it would not be out of place if I explained in a few words why I entirely agree with her that there are consolatory aspects, and that we have no reason to feel cast down. We all take the keenest interest in the question that has been discussed within the last few days. But I should like to point out that even in this there is a consolatory aspect, because, to my own knowledge, many persons interested in Women’s Suffrage, and perfectly willing to grant votes to women, are not willing to go further ; and we must not be too hard on our friends who are willing to go with us on the question of the Suffrage because they are not willing to go a little further with regard to the London Government Bill. I should like to draw your attention, and particularly that of our foreign friends, to the reasons why there is much that is consolatory and much that is encouraging. It is true that for many years this question has been advocated, and success has not yet followed the efforts of friends of the cause. But, after all, the time that has elapsed since the reactionary period began is not a long time in the history of political

movement. In 1832 a great blow was struck at Women's Franchise by the Reform Bill, and later, in 1835 and 1836, the Municipal Franchises were taken away. It is equally true that for many years it was impossible to restore these privileges. But in 1869 the Municipal Franchise was successfully restored, although the great prophet of the movement, John Stuart Mill, was unsuccessful in carrying his amendment. It may be said that in that year the low-water mark of the movement was reached, and ever since that time there have been growing indications that we were on the upward grade, and progressing to a more rational and reasonable state of affairs. I need not refer to the passage in 1870 of the Married Women's Property Act. 1886 was the first occasion on which a Second Reading of a Women's Suffrage Bill was secured in the House. In 1888 women secured the right to vote for County Councils, and in 1894 to vote for Parish and District Councils, and in other parts of the Empire—in 1893 in New Zealand, and 1894 in South Australia—there was a recognition of the undoubted right of women to take part in Parliamentary elections. In 1897 we were once more successful in the House of Commons in passing a Second Reading of the Women's Franchise Bill by the very substantial majority of 71. I have thus rapidly traced the course of a reaction which has been both slow and tiresome, but it has been a reaction, the course of which can be clearly traced in the history of the country. You have also many proofs that the influence and intelligence of women have been appreciated in the country. In later years they have been frequently appointed upon Royal Commissions and Enquiries, and recently, by popular election, they have been returned as Poor Law Guardians and upon School Boards. But this is not all. Have they not justified the confidence that has been placed in them? Have they not proved by their acts that they are competent as citizens to deliberate upon and decide the great questions that come before the country from time to time? Have they not graduated with success and distinction in our Universities? Last of all, I would remind you that this great Empire has been ruled over for over 60 years by a woman (cheers), and surely if the affairs of an empire like that of Great Britain can be governed by a woman, her sisters ought to be entitled to a vote in connection with the Parliamentary Franchise. I will conclude by asking you to approve the resolution which I have proposed. The movement is progressive. Why should the movement stop? Logic is with us: those against us are the cynics and the sham friends of the

cause. What state was ever saved by cynics? There is no question that the movement must go forward and must succeed. Mrs Fawcett alluded to the great question agitating the world at this moment. What is the injustice which is disturbing the whole population of South Africa? Is it not the denial of the Franchise to the law-abiding and tax-paying citizen? We have half a million of women Outlanders in England who are denied the Franchise. I say it is for them and those in favour of their claims to go on patiently and unremittingly pressing the demand that their claims should be granted, and I have no doubt whatever of ultimate success.

Mrs Wynford Philipps, in seconding the resolution, said: It is nearly half a century since a famous woman, the wife of John Stuart Mill, published a little pamphlet declaring that women should be politically free, nearly 50 years since the first Women's Suffrage Congress was held in America. Now, on the threshold of the twentieth century, we rejoice to welcome here to-night the veteran leader from America, Miss Susan B. Anthony — (applause) — and the delegates from those generous young countries that have dared to do what we have dreamed of, and have justified in the New World the faith of the most enlightened thinkers in the Old. The International Congress gives a living answer to many pampered old prejudices and favourite old fears about what women will do when they come together for public-spirited purposes. I only wish people would cultivate their hopes half as carefully as they coddle and cuddle their fears! The Congress proves that women can take an interest in home affairs and in national and international affairs at the same time. Most arguments against Women's Suffrage need not be met; they need only be stated, for, like the Kilkenny cats, they devour one another. It is said that woman is too superior—that she is too inferior; that she is too angelic—that she is too earthly; that she is too Conservative and retrograde—that she is too Radical and go-ahead! Mr Beresford Hope, in opposing the Woman Suffrage Bill in 1870, said the male intellect was logical and judicial, the female was instinctive and emotional, and that the instinctive and emotional had its own duties—to influence, to moderate, to suffer, but not to govern! Mr Lang, in 1867, on the other hand, said he opposed the Suffrage on the ground that the instincts of all men were against it, and he had much greater confidence in instinct than in logic. From which we observe that instinct in man is a reason why he should govern, even to the extent of keeping women out of governing power,



whilst in woman it is a reason why she must not be permitted to govern, though she may very properly be permitted to suffer. Nowhere is this attitude amongst the lords of creation seen so clearly as when they are also created Lords—in the House of Lords only this week there has been set the harsh barrier of serried prejudices against the logical, natural, wise and righteous demands of women that they should have some share of government in this great city. It is said the vote would cause woman to leave her special sphere—the home; but does it cause man to leave his special sphere—his profession, workshop, business? What it would do is to bring into the home wider interests, deeper sympathies, and teach woman the needs of those less happily havened than herself in this great empire on which the sun never sets, but in the shadow of which are many shipwrecked lives and many desolated homes. Woman is said to be “the angel of the hearth,” then let her not sit so long with drooped and folded wings; let her spread the strong pinions of her extended sympathies and bear upward into better conditions the heavy burden of human want and human woe. It is said, too, that if women had a vote that men and women would disagree, and there would be serious domestic and social discord; but remember that men have never yet been found to agree on any single point whatsoever, and women have never yet been found to agree on any single point of any kind. Is it likely that at this late day they will at last learn to agree, only in order that they may disagree with one another? My earnest appeal to you women delegates from so many lands is to let no petty, personal, ephemeral consideration stand between you and the demand for this great reform. I beg you to persist in it, remembering that it is the only sure foundation of all you care for, the power to do right more efficiently, to obtain right more rapidly, to retain right more certainly, and without it, the structure of women’s new and noble liberties is necessarily insecure and incomplete. The vote is sometimes spoken of as if it were a little thing, but it is not a little thing. Wrapped up in the heart and soul of the English-speaking people is the firm conviction that the vote is a great thing, the sign of worth and dignity—the possession of which puts a hall-mark of excellence upon a man. Five million women have had to enter the labour market, and there, suffering under many a disadvantage, woman is tried in the fire of life, and has she not proved herself of sterling metal? If that be so, then stamp *her* with the hall-mark! Rightly understood and rightly used, the political voice is the conscience of the nation, that still,

small, but most potent voice, that may inspire the body politic with the living spirit of the people. Therefore claim the vote for women, that the structure of government may be breathed into by the animating spirit not only of the manhood, but the womanhood of the nation.

The **Hon. Mrs Arthur Lyttleton**, speaking in support of the resolution, said: I stand before you here very apologetically instead of Dr Cockburn, the great champion of women in South Australia. I can in no way fill his place, for he could have told you of the success of Women's Suffrage in that country, and one ounce of proof is worth a great deal of prophesied success. I have been asked why we devote so much time and energy to this propaganda instead of devoting ourselves to the more obvious good causes that lie before us. My answer is that not only does Women's Suffrage lie at the back of all these philanthropic movements and that none of them will succeed without it, but that there are in the lives of States, as in the lives of individuals, psychological moments, times when certain things ought to be done; and if they are not done, then the State or individual suffer for it. To my mind we are fast reaching one of these moments in the present condition of women in our country. Owing to the advance of civilisation, we have attained a very different position from that which we held fifty years ago. The increased safety of our streets, the use of steam, the general progress of civilisation, even the bicycle, has helped to change the position of women enormously in the last fifty years. Their freedom is now an established fact; but freedom without responsibility is a very dangerous thing, and this is fast becoming the condition of women in many parts of the world. I do not know if you have ever come across a certain poem of Keats called "Woman":

"Oh, who can e'er forget so fair a being?  
Who can forget her half-retiring sweets?  
God! she is like a milk-white lamb that bleats  
For man's protection."

When I heard that many of the peers who voted against the clause allowing women to serve on the new councils did so because the women they knew urged them to vote against it, I felt that those women wished to be considered as "milk-white lambs bleating for man's protection." The great difficulty in our way is that there is no one at this moment whose direct interest it is to press forward Women's Suffrage. Everyone—

I speak more especially of the governing bodies of the male sex—is more afraid of what women will do than hopeful of what they will gain from the women's vote. Thus, if this great movement is to succeed, it must be through enthusiasm only, and it is therefore incumbent upon all who believe in it to work with their whole heart and soul and strength. We have, as I cannot but think, a very great amount of strong opposition yet to face, and it will be very hard work to overcome it. The adjustment of the relations of the sexes, like those of the classes, will take a long time to accomplish. When once Women's Suffrage is obtained we shall hear much less of the perhaps well-founded charge that we think too much of women's questions, and that we exalt ourselves at the expense of men. We do so because persons who are oppressed are always self-asserting, and the way to prevent this self-assertion is to put them on a level with men. We ought to be inspired by the presence here of friends from all parts of the world to work with more vigour and more enthusiasm. The century is waning to its close, but I hope the childhood of the next century will see Women's Suffrage an accomplished fact, and that with it there will come a higher, stronger, nobler, and, I confidently believe, a more Christian view of the relations between men and women.

The resolution was then put and carried by acclamation.

**Miss Susan B. Anthony** (U.S.A.), who was received with prolonged applause, the audience all rising, in responding to the resolution, said: Mrs President, Officers and Members of the Suffrage Societies of Great Britain and Ireland and of all the world over, I wish I might be worthy of the honour which Mrs Philipps gave me of being one of those who, more than fifty years ago, assembled in the little town of Seneca Falls, New York, and made the declaration that the right to vote is the underlying right, the one which protects all other rights. But I was not there. Lucretia Mott was there, and Martha C. Wright, whose daughter sits beside me, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton—all signers of the call for that first Convention. I hear all these women, and the men also, asking, "Why is it that when this first proclamation for the ballot was made in the United States more than half a century ago, other countries are getting ahead of us?" Well, I can assure you there are many reasons. It is not from any lack of hard work and persistent effort on the part of the handful of women who have stood at the front of this movement in our country; but the complications are very unlike those in your own country.

Suppose that here in England, after all your labours and after your magnificent champions—from John Stuart Mill and Jacob Bright down to Mr Begg—had worked in your Parliament for years, had urged the enactment of a law, and succeeded in getting it through the House of Lords, that the question then had to be voted on by every elector in the mines, the factories and the rural districts of every county of England, how much would you expect to get all at once? And that is the difficulty with us.

Our revolutionary fathers proclaimed equal political rights. At first they made practical application to a very few men only, and during the more than a hundred years' battle in our country those great principals have been gradually extended to one class after another. In the beginning only Church members voted, then only rich men, then only white men, then only men; that is, we had an aristocracy of the Church, then an aristocracy of men of wealth, then an aristocracy of white men, and at last we now have an aristocracy of *men*. We are simply demanding to-day the application of our fundamental principle of political equality to the other half of our citizens. We are asking for nothing new, but simply for the practical application of the old doctrine that was declared by Hancock and Adams and all the old revolutionists, who rebelled against King George because he insisted on taxing them without giving them the right of representation. We are insisting to-day that the men of the United States shall no longer continue to violate their principles—to tax women and deny them representation. We have what you might call 45 Englands; that is, we have 45 States, and each State Legislature must first pass a resolution submitting the question to be voted upon by the men of that State. We have succeeded in gaining the Franchise in 4 States of the Union by this slow process.

Another hindrance I want to mention to you: every single year, over a quarter of a million of foreign-born men are landed on our shores, fresh from the monarchies of the Old World, who know nothing at all of the Declaration of Independence, of the principles of free and equal government, and we have, as General Grant once said, a "big job on our hands," we have to educate a quarter of a million of men every year into the principles of our American Institutions. And I want to say to you, my good friends, that in every one of the 15 States in the Union in which the question has been voted upon, if only the native-born men had had the franchise, the women in everyone of them would

have had the ballot to-day. I am not sorry that those men who do not understand our institutions have the right to vote, for they never would understand them if they had not that right. So we must wait with patience this slow process of education. And we have been very patient; in our half century of agitation and education we have gained Women's Suffrage in 4 States! And besides that, women have Municipal Suffrage in 1 State, a vote on matters of taxation in several others, and School Suffrage, to a greater or less extent, in 23 States. In over one-half of the States of our Union, women are voting to-day. In Louisiana, one of the old Slave States, on the sixth day of this month, women taxpayers in the city of New Orleans, for the first time in history, cast their ballots on the question of taxing the people of that city for the purpose of building sewers and improving sanitary conditions. The men were so considerate of the women when they made that constitutional provision, that they arranged for them to vote by proxy if they were too modest to go to the ballot-box. When some of the women attempted to get a proxy they learned that, by the law of Louisiana, a married woman's name on a certificate would not stand, and therefore they were compelled to go to the ballot-box.

The distance we have gone in the last fifty years is beyond computation. Before I sit down I will tell one little incident illustrating the condition of things when we started. I had been a teacher in the State of New York for fifteen years—from the age of 15 to 30. A State Teachers' Convention was held in my city of Rochester. Over 1000 women had gathered in that Convention and perhaps 200 men. Up to that time no woman's voice had ever been heard in one of these Conventions; only men had reported the result of their experience, because it was considered improper for a woman to speak in public. Those men appointed a committee to prepare resolutions, and one of these declared that teachers were not respected as were ministers, lawyers and doctors. In discussing that resolution one man declared that the profession of teacher was higher than that of a doctor, of more use to the community; another, that it was higher than that of the lawyer, and a third even affirmed that it was of more service to the world to train the young than it was to try to reform them after they had been brought up in a crooked way. "And yet," said these men, "ministers, lawyers and doctors are treated with the greatest respect, invited into the best families, often elected to high offices, whereas schoolmasters are

treated slightly, and are often called Miss Nancies and old grandmothers!" I listened with a great deal of interest, and at length—having been born and reared a Quaker, and always taught that God inspired a woman to speech just as well as a man—I rose in my seat and said, "Mr President!" The President was a Professor of Mathematics at West Point, a pompous man, wearing a blue coat, brass buttons and buff vest. He stepped to the front of the platform and, inserting his thumbs in his armholes said, "What will the lady have?" The idea never entered that man's cranium that a woman could rise in her seat and address the chair just like a man! And I said, "Mr President and gentlemen, I would like to say a word on the question under discussion." "Then," said Professor Davies, "what is the pleasure of the Convention?" And he looked down to this little handful of men on the front seats, never casting a furtive glance to the thousand women crowding that hall. One man moved that the lady should be heard, and another seconded, and they discussed the question for half an hour! At last, by a very small majority, it was decided that the lady should be heard, and I managed to say: "Mr President and gentlemen, I have listened to your discussion with a great deal of interest, but it seems to me that none of you quite comprehend the cause of the disrespect of which you complain. Do you not see that so long as society says a woman hasn't brains enough to be either a minister, a lawyer, or a doctor, but has ample brains to be a teacher, that every man of you who teaches school practically acknowledges that he hasn't any more brains than a woman?" and sat down. As I passed out of that hall at the close of the Session I heard many a woman whispering to another, "Who is that creature?" "Where did she come from?" "I was never so ashamed in my life, I wished the floor had opened and swallowed me up!" They were honest, they really believed it was degrading to a woman to speak. The next morning Professor Davies, in calling the Convention to order, assumed his pompous position and said: "I have been asked why it is that women are not put upon the committees, why they are not invited to prepare reports, and so on." And then he continued: "Look at this magnificent hall, at the beauty of the entablature, the symmetry of the shaft, and the strength of the pedestal. Could I be instrumental in dragging from its proud elevation that beautiful entablature and rolling it in the dirt and dust that surround the pedestal? No, Heaven forbid!" And he was quite sincere, and really believed that if a woman

stood in an audience and spoke she would be degraded to the level of a man. Exactly so now, men are afraid that if women vote, if they hold office, if they sit in Congressional and Parliamentary halls, they will degrade themselves to the level of men!!

The Hon. W. P. Reeves said: Unlike previous speakers, I make no pretensions to eloquence. You do not expect me to deal with the past or with the future, to tell you the long story of oppression and injustice in the past or to soar upwards into the glorious hopes and possibilities of the future. You want me to tell you about the commonplace, work-a-day present. Yet there is some satisfaction in dealing with an actual fact, and I have come here to speak about the work of Women's Suffrage in two British Colonies. Is England proud of her Colonies? When it comes to telling foreign nations of the grandeur and growth of the British Empire I hear Englishmen say that our Colonies are very fine things indeed—vigorous, robust, progressive, and even great; but when it comes to taking a hint or two on domestic reform from those Colonies, of profiting by example—then, one hears that they are small, young, a long way off, and peopled by an inexperienced race. Well, they are some distance away, and they are young countries. But it does not follow that everyone in a young country rejoices in the first bloom of youth. The British Colonies are peopled by men and women who are uncommonly like the people of the mother country; they are of the same race, profess the same religion, read the same books—to some extent even the same newspapers—wear the same dress, are governed in many respects by the same laws, even share the same prejudices and obey some of the same social conventions: and they are uncommonly proud of it. True, the white people of New Zealand number but three-quarters of a million, and the people of South Australia about half that number. Yet I cannot help thinking that as they are distinguished by industry, sobriety, obedience to the law and a general wholesome condition physically and morally, that it may not be beneath the dignity even of the people of this great metropolis to study their experience and institutions. Female Suffrage has been the law in New Zealand for between 5 and 6 years. Now when a child is 5½ years old no doubt it is rather soon to predict what sort of a man or woman that child will become, but I think you may predict, if it is robust and well-grown, that it has a good chance of living a healthy, good and strong life. Female Suffrage is a very healthy youngster indeed; it has come to stay in New

Zealand and South Australia, and so well and comfortably does it work in both Colonies that the only complaint raised against it is it has not produced the revolutionary results its opponents predicted. They expected a tornado; they only met a gentle breeze; and they have the bad grace to complain of it. I do not mean to say that it necessarily follows that when Female Suffrage becomes law in this country—as I hope and believe it will before very long—that exactly the same complaint will be made after 5 years; but exactly the same sort of evil predictions as I have heard here were launched at the head of the movement at the Antipodes before it became law. We heard exactly the same tales about neglected children, abandoned husbands, vile cooking, untidy houses, and a general falling off of feminine grace, sweetness and charm. None of these evil effects have come about; social life in New Zealand is very much the same as it was before, and if at election time a man finds that the lady next to whom he sits at dinner is able to talk in a practical way about the political questions of the day—that certainly does not make dinner time duller or less interesting. What has been most striking and noteworthy of all has been the cool, rational good sense with which woman has applied herself in our part of the world to discharging her duties as a citizen. This she does very much as rational men do, and on many subjects takes the same sort of view. A previous speaker remarked that one objection advanced in this country against Women's Suffrage is that women's intellect is instinctive and emotional. I daresay that in her relations with man, woman displays an amount of sympathy and self-sacrifice that makes her seem—to man—a very instinctive, emotional and irrational creature; no doubt she treats him a great deal better than he deserves. But it has occurred to me sometimes, whether man in his relations with woman—especially younger men in their relations with younger women—may not sometimes seem to a woman to be a little instinctive and emotional also? I can well imagine that the younger of my sex do not always seem to be the most severely logical of human creatures in their relations with the younger of the opposite sex. But it is an actual fact that in the Australian Colonies woman has taken her part as a citizen on common sense and business lines. After five years of the Suffrage I can truthfully say that New Zealand is more prosperous now than she has been at any time during the last twenty years. You may take my word for it that the five and a half years of Women's Suffrage in New Zealand has only strengthened the conviction with which the



majority of that Colony passed the law which initiated it. And as it came suddenly, almost as an agreeable surprise, to those who had hoped for it over a long series of years, so I venture to believe that it will come suddenly and unexpectedly some day in England; and though I daresay some of the enthusiastic supporters of the movement may have to confess, after five years' experience, that it has not brought about the millennium, still its opponents will have to confess that the heavens have not fallen and that the empire still stands where it stood.

**Frau Marie Stritt** (Germany) followed. She said: As the only speaker here to-night representing one of the less-advanced nations—for, as you doubtless know, German women have not as yet arrived at the point of demanding political rights; at least, the demand has not been officially put on their programme—you may think it a presumption on my part and humiliating for me to speak to the resolution. But I feel by no means humiliated, for I hope not only to lay clearly before you the reasons why we are apparently so far behind in the Suffrage question, but also to prove to you that German women have clearly recognised the nature and aims of the movement for the emancipation of women, and that we are in harmony with our sisters all over the world in the conviction that we shall and can attain our full human rights only through our full civil and political rights, and by taking part in the legislation of our country. Constitutional and Parliamentary reforms are, comparatively speaking, new and strange conceptions on the horizon of the Germans. The German citizen's right to vote, to take his share in the government of the country, is to-day still looked upon as a valuable acquisition rather than as a national right, and is, to a certain extent, only considered as a reward for his general military duty.

This aspect has of course asserted its influence also on the German Women's Movement; its first bodies considered the Suffrage not so much the foundation, as the sheltering roof of the house of the future to whose building they contributed the stones. They were of opinion that women should first make themselves fit for the Suffrage by better education, by all professions being open to them, but that means of fitness, as the English and American pioneers always thought, and as the younger German leaders agree, can only be gained by the Suffrage. That Suffrage belongs rightly to the tax-paying woman citizen just as surely as it belongs to the tax-paying man; without that right women must at best content themselves with only fragments of their full human rights. An exclusively male legislation

cannot do justice to the other half of society. When the first Women's Suffrage Bill was brought before Parliament, Louisa Otto—whom we call the mother of the German movement—and others, openly dwelt upon the necessity of the Suffrage, but recommended that those claims should no longer be brought, or even mentioned for the present. They were afraid on the one hand of rousing the worst feelings of the German men, accustomed for long years to absolute lordship, on the other of intimidating the German women, accustomed for long years to humility and suppression. These tactics have been followed for nearly thirty years, but things have changed, and we have at last learned that too much prudence may tend to imprudence, and that, to avoid misunderstanding, things should now be called by their right names. But the generally unfavourable and negative results in our Reichstag regarding questions such as the opening of Colleges, Universities, and liberal professions to women, labour legislation for women, etc., constantly give us fresh proof of how badly the interests of our sex are watched over by men, and that women can only be effectually represented by women themselves. So to-day we openly say this in our women's journals and pamphlets, at every Convention, even at those of the National Council which can only deal with subjects on which all the members heartily agree. In short, we propagate the principles of Women's Suffrage at every opportunity, but only, I am bound to say, as an ideal claim.

The reason why no Women's Suffrage Society exists in Germany, why no Women's Suffrage Bill has been presented in Parliament, does not lie either in the want of knowledge or foresight of the leading persons, or in cowardly fear of public opinion, it lies in external circumstances. There still exists in most German States a special law forbidding schoolboys, ministers and women to take part in any political society or political meeting. That is to say, no woman may become a member of any political society, and the presence of a woman in the meeting of a political party can cause its dissolution by the ever-present police agent. Thus, you see an insuperable obstacle still stands between us and throwing down of this barrier to the freedom of our sex. Our National Council, which at the present time represents the woman question in Germany, at its last Convention in Hamburg, unanimously resolved to take its stand for the Suffrage. I hope that at the next International Congress we may be able to announce a hopeful commencement of the action taken by German women as the inevitable struggle for their right of self-

government. Till then we cannot do better than rejoice heartily in the great results our happier sisters are obtaining in the Suffrage movement. No one takes such a heartfelt interest in your struggles and victories as we German women do. Our movement is an international one, our question a question of humanity, so we greet every fresh vote for the Suffrage Bill in the English Parliament as a vote given in our favour. We see in every new star on the banner of the American women a star of hope which has risen for us too, which shines also upon our future and the future of our children.

Lady Henry Somerset said: It was not a woman who was pleading against her wrongs or claiming her rights, but one of the broadest-minded and best-balanced intellects of this generation, who said that "the demand that woman should have the vote was the first organised protest against the injustice which has brooded over the character and destiny of one half of the human race. Nowhere else," said Wendell Phillips, "under any circumstances has a demand ever yet been made for the liberties of one whole half of our race."

We have only to trace the history of all enlightened government to see the evolution by which it has come slowly from a past of tyranny and a reign of force, and has little by little expanded under the light of religion and civilisation, and each reform as it came forward has been combated by the inherent selfishness of those who desired to maintain existing conditions against justice and right. First, the freedom of all classes had to be established; then the freedom to obtain the necessities of life; then the freedom of expression of thought and opinion; then the freedom of religious conviction—inch by inch this liberty has been fought for by those who have been in every succeeding generation the pioneers of wider thought. In every struggle the social fabric of the past has been against the progressive movement of the future.

It is, therefore, no wonder that a reform that strikes a vital blow at the whole social fabric of every nation is slow in coming—so slow that to some it seems an almost hopeless delay; but although every year brings to some of us the thought that we are individually, perhaps less likely ourselves, to see the righting of this wrong and the triumph of justice, I am not sorry that time intervenes; for time means much to woman at this present crisis; time means education, a juster understanding of the real principles that underlie the demand, a truer conviction of the necessity of reform.

The day has almost gone when it is necessary to make any statement as to the justice of the principle that women, as tax-paying members of civil society, are entitled to the same privileges as tax-paying men. Granted for a moment that woman is intellectually inferior, that it is impossible for women to look upon great questions with the same balance as men, that it would be impossible for any woman to attain the intellectual heights to which men have climbed—I am not at all disturbed by these arguments. The humblest and the feeblest man has civil rights which are denied to women. There is no competitive examination among men for the vote, for this would infallibly eliminate a large proportion of voters whose intellect (although male) is at best mediocre. I understand that a man votes because of the eternal justice of the principle that taxation and representation must be co-extensive; that burdens and privileges must go together. It is the basis, I believe, of the government of all free countries.

Woman may be essentially different in intellect from man; but at anyrate none on reflection can deny that the average woman ranks with the average man; that if a man's privileges are not accorded to him by any measure of intellect, while our civilisation allows a woman to hold property, to be the guardian of her children, it seems almost within the range of possibility that she would be likely to be able to vote as well as a man on whom is thrown the same responsibility.

But there is one point that proves conclusively the fact that where responsibility is given to woman she has not failed. Consider the Queens that have been great in history, women who rank amongst the greatest monarchs the world has known. They were not picked women, not women chosen because they were intellectually supremely greater than most of their sex, but women to whom the accident of birth brought the responsibility. Can you deny the statesmanship of women, with such examples as Queen Elizabeth, Queen Anne, Maria Theresa, Catherine II. or Margaret of Austria? And gathered as we are to-day in the mother-land, have we not a supreme instance of this in Queen Victoria? It is necessary, therefore, to admit that when responsibility has been thrown upon woman she has proved the equal of man.

Again, we are told that the responsibilities and cares of woman bind her so completely that it is impossible that her mind should be at liberty to consider and weigh the different questions which should affect her views in political life. Allowing that the

woman's responsibilities are heavy, and granted that her work must absorb nearly all her time, even then to my mind the objection has no weight. How about the responsibilities of men in professional life? The doctor who has a hundred lives hanging in the balance, and whose thought is day and night engaged in their physical cure; the head of a college on whom rests the care of hundreds of young men; the general who has to plan his campaign; the merchant whose mind is absorbed with schemes of speculation. They have still sufficient leisure left to consider political questions and to vote.

And then there is another argument, perhaps more specious, and that is that woman may safely trust all her interests to the watchful care of man. No one is more fully aware of what women owe to men than I. No one deprecates more the tendency to range the interests of women's questions as against the interests of men. The whole status of woman would have but little interest to me if it were not to my mind a part of the great human question in which is involved the happiness and welfare of mankind. The question is not only, Is it best for women? but, Is it best for men? and my feeling strongly is that while I believe men have legislated in many instances fairly on questions pertaining to women, it is absolutely impossible for them to understand the intricacies of a woman's position as woman can herself.

Why is it that women inspectors have been an infinite boon to the factory? Why is it that women guardians have been a blessing to the workhouse, that their presence on Vestries has been of value? Because there are details and aspects of every question better understood by women, and this is not narrowed down to municipal life alone, but on the great social questions women's views would be in many instances likely to be more correct, more practical, than the views of men. Moreover, all who feel strongly upon social legislation realise that woman's vote is essential to the welfare of the State, just because these are the questions that would keenly interest the woman voter.

But then men turn to what they believe form the interest of the largest proportion of women. They say, "Look at the fashion papers, look at the literature that woman reads, and tell me that the average woman is fitted to be a voter." I do not wish to compare the frivolities of women with the frivolities of men (sometimes we would wish that the follies of men could be called by a name as innocent as that), but I merely wish to emphasise the fact that responsibility is the greatest instrument for education. We have all seen it again and again. We have seen an

empty-minded man or woman hold out hands to accept some serious responsibility, and from that hour become changed. The frivolity is gone, the responsibility has moulded the character, and the very questions that seemed to be uninteresting and unimportant have become vital.

And if this is so, by what right is woman to be denied the education of responsibility? It may be true that man is ready to represent her politically, but he bears none of the burdens that are attached to her citizenship. When a woman is left with a young family, no man comes forward to pay her taxes. When a woman is sentenced by the law, she bears her own punishment; no man bears it vicariously. The women of Germany and of Italy labour on the highway and the harvest field; in France you see them tilling the soil. I have not noticed that men think it necessary to relieve them of the burden of labour. They are very willing that woman should take her place in sharing the world's toil.

The charge of the children is considered to be woman's peculiar domain, and those who oppose our movement lay more emphasis on this than on any other aspect of the question. "What can a woman want more," they say, "than to fulfil her mission in educating and caring for children?" But I maintain here again that woman's interest in this her special domain has not been protected. A woman's child is only her own so long as that child is born under shameful conditions (and then the child, so wrongly called illegitimate—for there is no illegitimacy save in the relations of the father and the mother—belongs to the woman); but if for any reason it is impossible that the woman should remain with the father when he is her husband, if his drunkenness or brutality makes it obvious that he is unfitted for parental duty, the child, until she can prove her case, belongs, according to the State, solely to the father. A little while ago a father had the power to will away the child from its mother, and although the laws have been greatly remedied in this respect, they still remain in a most unsatisfactory condition. A woman goes into a court of law handicapped, not because she has not an equal case to prove, but because she has to start with the assumption that the children are not hers, but belong to her husband, and therefore, to obtain their custody, she has a double burden of proof to produce. Many other points might be cited in which it is obvious that in those very departments which are woman's chief sphere, her interests have not been guarded.

What are the questions that are involved in the government

of any nation? Our relations with foreign countries, our finance, the religious, educational and moral questions that affect the social life, the sanitary state of our cities, streets and houses. I do not think that anyone can be complacent with the conditions that we have arrived at even during the reign of the progressive ideas of this last century, or seriously satisfied with the vice and misery that surrounds thousands of our population, with the swarming multitudes of children growing up in densest ignorance, with the worn and weary men and women whose life is sweated in underground cellars, with the hopeless, starving multitude, who are many of them driven by their conditions into lives of vice and sin, with the harrowing, heart-breaking social problems that meet us at every turn. These rise up before us to tell us that the government of the past has not been an unmitigated success; and it may be that when the intellect of woman, differing as it may from that of man, is brought to bear upon some of these questions, the best interests of the masses will be involved in their political emancipation. No one who has watched the marvellous ingenuity of the woman to whom the earnings of, say, 15s. a week are entrusted, to be expended on a family of eight or nine, all of whom have to be fed, clothed and provided for in every particular, can have failed to observe that woman is an adept at solving some of the most difficult financial problems; and this responsibility is placed upon her in almost every home among the working classes.

Another objection that is constantly advanced is that the political differences that might exist between married people would render the exercise of her political responsibility dangerous to domestic happiness. But I would urge, Is there not at the present moment often conscientious difference of opinion between married people on highest points of duty? Women are allowed independent religious opinions; they may change their religion after marriage, and there is no question upon which more bitterness can arise than differences of religious views. But I do not think it has ever been urged that for this reason a married woman should have no religious individuality, but rather I believe that, with a better education and a juster view of their relations, there will be more mutual toleration, as individual responsibility increases, between the man and woman who each recognises the other's opinions, intellectual attainments and duties.

But whatever may be the arguments that can be advanced against the proposition to give woman her political freedom, I believe that we must ask ourselves on this as on all other

questions, if there is a principle of right or wrong involved, if there is not a sense of justice that should turn the scale; and if it is true that the education, the responsibility, the readjustment of property law, and a thousand other questions, must force us to the conclusion that the time has come when such freedom must be given to women, and such responsibility entrusted to them. Then I believe it is for all to side with the right, to trust God, and we shall see in the end that such trust will prove to be expedient.

It has been well said that "our sense of justice will dictate that the being who is to suffer under laws shall first personally assent to them," that the being whose industry Government is to burden should have a voice in fixing the character and the amount of that burden; and I believe that when responsibility is accepted, not from human hands but from that Infinite Wisdom which establishes the rules of right, those who most dread the effect of woman's political emancipation will realise that far from deteriorating her character, it will have unfolded her moral nature, and that as she studies the great human questions with which she is called to deal, she will become more prudent, more sagacious under the stimulus and check of responsibility.

But there is another reason why I feel that the vote given to women will be of inestimable benefit, and that is because I think it ought to tend to create a greater accord between the moral standards of men and women; for if woman is to mould a new life, it must be that instead of increased responsibility dividing the ways, it should bring them nearer together; for every cause, no matter what it is, that separates man and woman, every interest that divides them does not make for the best good of any nation. Has not this curse been most deeply demonstrated where men have been divided from the community for military purposes? Around the soldier's camp there has always been the greatest amount of evil and temptation, and the best hope that has come to the last years of this dying century is the message of peace that seems to us as a herald of a better day. Nothing will do more to break down the power of war than the influence of woman, who necessarily must be opposed to all that endangers the lives of those she loves; and I believe that when the age comes, in which a woman can say, "I am part of the State, I am a part of the industrial evolution, I am a part of everything that a man values, I think his thoughts with him, I can follow him in lines of philosophy or



philanthropy or history or science," then will come that better union which alone can bring mutual happiness and self-respect. The Arabs used to say of a good man that "he is a brother of girls," and I would never speak upon the question of woman's responsibilities or woman's rights without recognising how much man has done to open the great doors of the future to the ideals to which we are looking.

But it is impossible for me to close these words without admitting that I do not wonder that sometimes there is hesitation in the minds of the best as to the expediency of pressing forward. If I believed that the admittance of women to wider responsibility was likely to endanger the most sacred ties of life, instead of promoting a truer understanding of their value, I too should hesitate; for I believe that no one can with impunity lay a finger on the ark of the solemn mysteries of life, which are ordained by God Himself; and when I hear proposals that these sacred ties should be bartered for financial remuneration, and schemes by which mothers are to be merely recognised agents for replenishing a country's population, then I feel that woman herself has built up the highest barrier to her own interest.

I do not say I believe that there cannot be a wider and a better understanding of the mutual responsibilities of marriage, and the mutual duties involved in the tie, that the best chances of happiness must be the cultivation of the best in each, so that each may help in the development of the other; but I maintain the profoundest conviction that the ideal of marriage must be preserved, that it must be guarded as a sacred institution, grounded on the truth of the divine nature that is in every human being as the absolute principle upon which the whole ethical character of family life rests. "Marriage," says Hegel, "is essentially a spiritual relation," and if we are going to attempt to treat it as a mere contract, as something that relates only to the interest of property or to the furtherance of individual opportunity, the result will be the utter destruction of social life and disaster to the community. I am well aware that on the individual may sometimes heavily fall the penalty of these principles, but none the less they are ordained by God Himself, and on them He has founded the whole up-building of our family life.

I recognise in standing here to-day that I have round me some of the keenest intellects, the best-balanced brains, and the hardest workers among women from all lands. I understand, in part, the immense amount of work for humanity that has

been accomplished by them ; but yet I should be false to all that I hold dearest, to the principles that are nearest to my heart, if I did not say quite plainly that from my soul I deplore that women are often silent now to-day, from a mistaken liberality, which is, I feel, but faithlessness to the cause of Christ ; for I realise, perhaps more deeply than ever, that woman's strongest influence lies in the fact that she must be loyal to the Christianity which has been from its outset a "woman movement," and here quite briefly I would like to ask you to look back a moment and consider whether it is not Christ who uprooted the social system of paganism, and whether He did not recognise man and woman on equal terms ?

Plutarch represented advanced thought among the Greeks ; but as to the rights of a wife, he said, "A wife shall have no friends but those of her husband, and as the gods are the first of friends, she should have no gods but those whom her husband adored." And it was an old Stoic who laid down the proposition that woman "in every kind of affairs and obligations, whether in behalf of men or women, is prohibited from having any concern." It was upon this social foundation that the reform was begun by the Lord, and it is owing to His teaching that Society now recognises the right of a wife, repudiates free marriages terminating at will (which were common among the Romans). For however much the Church may have been held back by the trammels of superstition, wherever the Gospel has been purest, wherever Christ's golden rule has been best understood, the progress of religious sentiment has continually tended towards the assertion of the independence of woman. Lecky, in speaking of Christianity, has well said, that "in no other important movement of thought was female influence so powerful or so acknowledged."

There comes to me a deeper sense of responsibility as I realise that I stand here to-day in the place of one who did the widest and greatest work for woman's welfare in this generation. I do not even except the veteran whom we honour here to-night, Susan B. Anthony, for Frances Willard brought to the heart and conscience of woman, as none other has, her deep responsibility to the world around her, and the intimate relations between the home and that larger home circle which we call Government. Her voice is silent here to-day, for she has been called to wider spheres of work. And there comes to me also the responsibility of knowing that the messages I can give to such gatherings as these will grow fewer. Thank God there are others to take our places abler and better ; but with the years

also, there comes to me, I think, a deeper understanding of woman's high and holy calling. I realise how the solemn vicissitudes of her life have helped to confirm her faith in the beautiful realities of the Unseen: how in the hours of pain and danger, when her steps lie along the borderland of this closely-curtained world, the gift she brings is the more sacred because it comes to her when the veil was thin between her and eternity: that the little life that lay in her arms has done more than all theories and arguments to keep hearts loving and unworldly, true to the interest of the race; that in these deepest and most sacred experiences lie the safeguard of our social life. I do not dread the future, for that anchor holds. As Christian women, we need not fear, but go forward with loyal trust to claim all the responsibility that God has for us. The happy, protected lives will give of the abundance of their joyful knowledge to enrich the world; the sad and lonely will use their sorrowful experience to bless others, and so shall be themselves enriched.

And to me this question of women's privileges and rights and responsibilities is part of a better understanding of the law of love each to each, given to the world by His lips Whose Gospel has lifted us up into these heavenly places, Who was a Brother to the Marys, and Who in His hour of mortal agony did not forget His mother, for it is a Hand pierced by the sorrows and sins of the world that points the way.

**Sir William Wedderburn**, Bt., M.P., moved a vote of thanks to **Mrs Fawcett** for presiding, which was seconded by **Sir Wilfred Lawson**, Bt., M.P. **Mrs Fawcett** briefly responded, and the meeting closed by singing a verse of "God Save the Queen."



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